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THE saint MAGAZINE

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Premier Issue:

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Some old, some new — the finest in mystery fiction.

EDITORIAL

Seventeen years ago, when it was decided to terminate the original SAINT Magazine after 14 years of publication, my sentimental regrets were tempered with something that could have been taken for a sigh of relief.

While most of the hard work had been done for me, I did have certain regular routine responsibilities which somewhat constricted my almost insatiable appetite for idleness, and to see the last of them was to feel as if a great burden, easily measurable in milligrams, had been lifted from my suffering shoulders.

Certainly it never occurred to me, then or afterwards, that the Magazine would ever pull a Lazarus on me. And even when John Ball and Herb Clough, out of the blue, approached me with a proposition to attempt that very thaumaturgy, I did my honest best to dissuade them, pointing out all the problems and perils, and insisting that I could offer them no more help than a sanctimonious blessing and the dubious benefit of my geriatric counsel, whenever and wherever this did not interfere with my serious studies in the velocity of racehorses and the degustation of wine.

You now have in your hand the first fruit of my sage advice. It may color for all time your view of what happens to people who listen to the opinions of senile citizens like me.

Win or lose, and without professing any hypocritical altruism, I think that this revival at least performs a kind of public service. Not merely do we hope to entertain a lot of readers, but to provide a lot of burgeoning writers with a stage on which to entertain them.

When I was starting in this trade, more than a couple of generations ago, the newsstands were stacked with fiction magazines of all sizes and qualities, purveying millions of words a month. For the beginning writer, this meant a market for hundreds and hundreds of stories: without putting all his eggs in the basket of one monumental novel, which might take him months to complete and might in the end earn him nothing, he could practise his craft on a dozen shorter pieces, each of which had a separate chance of scoring, if not a jackpot best-seller, at any rate an encouraging reward. Today, only a tiny fraction of those outlets are left—so where is he to get his training, and at the same time earn some bread?

The new SAINT Magazine, while it will certainly feature established masters, will, I hope, also give an airing to some upcoming talents of tomorrow.

I look ahead with as lively an interest as I did 30 years ago.

Leslie Charteris

THE *saint* MAGAZINE

June, 1984

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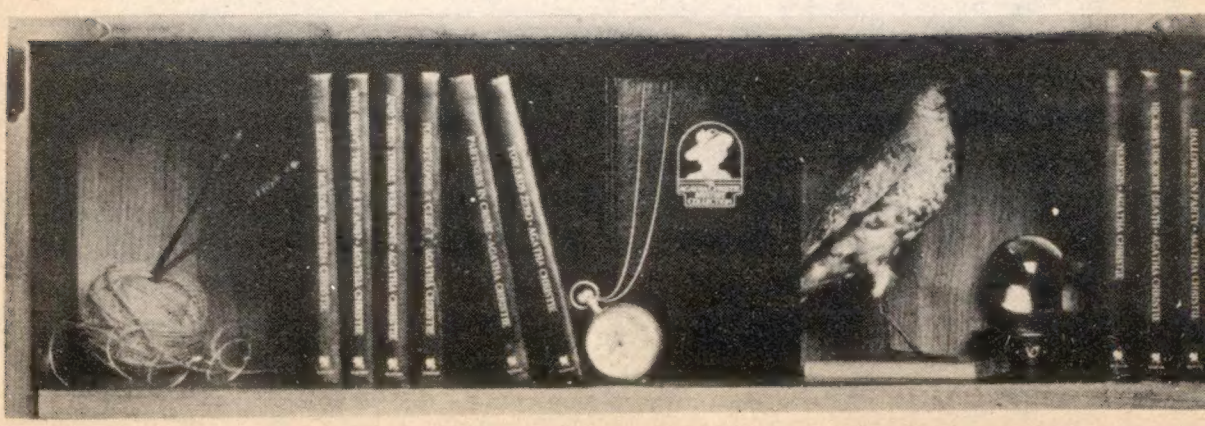

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Welcome to the new SAINT Magazine

In 1930, a brilliant young author wrote a novel called *The Last Hero.* His name was Leslie Charteris, and his work featured an immensely resourceful gentleman adventurer and sometimes rogue, Simon Templar, better known as The Saint.

Within a short time, in a continuing series of highly popular short stories, and an occasional book, the saga of The Saint caught fire. Where there was crime, he solved it; when fair damsels were in distress, he rescued them—but always with a style that set him well apart from his imitators.

Leslie Charteris, born in exotic Singapore, married to a famous and very attractive film star (Audrey Long), is, like his legendary character, tall, distinguished, and decidedly handsome. He could at any time have stepped into The Saint's shoes and filled them perfectly.

In the spring of 1953, a new publication appeared. Edited by Mr. Charteris, it was called *The Saint Detective Magazine.* The first issue featured such authors as Charteris himself, Agatha Christie, Damon Runyon, Ben Hecht, Mignon Eberhart, Frank Kane, Richard Sale, Cornell Woolrich, and Sax Rohmer. With a lineup like that, the new magazine zoomed off the literary launching pad. For the next decade or so, it became increasingly famous for its month-after-month presentation of topflight mystery fiction written by almost every big name in the field.

The Saint Magazine, as it was then known, ceased publication in October, 1967. It was a tragedy, because the field of high quality short crime fiction which had been largely concentrated between two literary giants, Charteris and his friend Ellery Queen, was now minus one of its stalwarts. In 1981, Mr. Queen, while a guest in our home, told a group of friends that the demise of *The Saint Magazine* was an undeserved loss to the whole mystery writing and reading fraternity. He added the hope, and the recommendation, that it be revived.

To that end, in 1983, we visited Leslie Charteris in England, where he now lives, and asked for his permission and cooperation in reestablishing *The Saint Magazine* for the many new readers who, perhaps, are unfamiliar with its past exalted position in the mystery field.

Mr. Charteris graciously agreed to the relaunching of *The Saint Magazine* and accepted the position of consultant.

With the approval of Leslie Charteris an accomplished fact, the staff of Halo Publications began once more to gather, in the Charteris tradition, high-quality stories from some of the top writers in the mystery/crime/suspense field. The result of all this activity is the new SAINT Magazine, the first issue of which is now in your hands. We hope you're as pleased with it as we are.

Welcome back, Leslie Charteris. May you and The Saint always be with us.

John Ball

Leslie Charteris

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LESLIE CHARTERIS

Leslie Charteris—multilingual, multifaceted, and multitalented—is a journalist, editor, world traveler, comic strip producer, magazine publisher, Fellow in the British Royal Society of Arts, raconteur, connoisseur, and extraordinarily prolific writer. His accomplishments range through a wide spectrum of the creative arts—novels, short stories, plays, screenplays, radio plays, and more. His most famous creation is, of course, Simon Templar—The Saint—hero of the longest-running fictional series written by a single author. The Saint stick figure, with halo above, is recognized worldwide.

The new SAINT Magazine is truly honored to present, in each issue, a classic Saint short story. Our initial offering, THE RUSSIAN PRISONER, involves people and events that could have been culled from today's news—espionage, defection, and an impossible mission.

THE RUSSIAN PRISONER

"Excuse me. You are the Saint. You must help me."

By that time Simon Templar thought he must have heard all the approaches, all the elegant variations. Some were amusing, some were insulting, some were unusual, most were routine, a few tried self-consciously to be original and attention-getting. He had, regrettably, become as accustomed to them as any Arthurian knight-errant must eventually have become. After all, how many breeds of dragons were there? And how many different shapes and colorations of damsels in distress?

This one would have about chalked up her first quarter-century, and would have weighed in at about five pounds per annum—not the high-fashion model's ratio, but more

© 1963 by Leslie Charteris

carnally interesting. She had prominent cheek bones to build shadow frames around blindingly light blue eyes, and flax-white hair that really looked as if it had been born with her and not processed later. She was beautiful like some kind of mythological ice-maiden.

And she had the distinction of having condensed a sequence of inescapable cliches to a quintessence which could only have been surpassed by a chemical formula.

"Do sit down," Simon said calmly. "I'm sure your problem is desperate, or you wouldn't be bringing it to a perfect stranger—but have you heard of an old English duck called Drake? When they told him the Spanish Armada was coming, he insisted on finishing his game of bowls before he'd go out to cope with it. I've got a rather nice bowl here myself, and it would be a shame to leave it."

He carefully fixed a cube of coarse farmhouse bread on the small tines of his long-shafted fork and dipped it in the luscious goo that barely bubbled in the chafing dish before him. When it was soaked and coated to its maximum burthen, he transferred it neatly to his mouth. Far from being an ostentatious vulgarity, this was a display of epicurean technique and respect, for he was eating *fondue*—perhaps the most truly national of Swiss delectables, that ambrosial blend of melted cheese perfumed with kirsch and other things, which is made nowhere better than at the Old Swiss House in Lucerne, where he was lunching.

"I like that," she said.

He pushed the bread plate towards her and offered a fork, hospitably.

"Have some."

"No, thank you. I mean that I like the story about Drake. And I like it that you are the same—a man who is so sure of himself that he does not have to get excited. I have already had lunch. I was inside, and I could see you through the window. Some people at the next table recognized you and were talking about you. I heard the name, and it was like winning a big prize which I had not even hoped for."

She spoke excellent English, quickly, but in a rather stilted

way that seemed to have been learned from books or vocal drill rather than light conversation, with an accent which he could not place immediately.

"A glass of wine, then? Or a liqueur?"

"A Benedictine, if you like. And some coffee, may I?"

He beckoned a waitress who happened to come out, and gave the order.

"You seem to know something about me," he said, spearing another piece of bread. "Is one supposed to know something about you, or are you a Mystery Woman?"

"I am Irma Jorovitch."

"Good for you. It doesn't have to be your real name, but at least it gives me something to call you." He speared another chunk of bread. "Now, you tell me your trouble. It's tedious, but we have to go through this in most of my stories, because I'm only a second-rate mind reader."

"I am Russian, originally," she said. "My family are from the part of Finland where the two countries meet, but since nineteen-forty it has been all Soviet. My father is Karel Jorovitch, and he was named for the district we came from. He is a scientist."

"Any particular science, or just a genius?"

"I don't know. He is a professor at the University of Leningrad. Of physics, I think. I do not remember seeing him except in pictures. During the war, my mother was separated from him, and she escaped with me to Sweden."

"You don't have a Swedish accent."

"Perhaps because I learnt English first from her, and I suppose she had a Finnish or a Russian accent. Then there were all sorts of teachers in Swedish schools. I speak everything like a mixture. But I learnt enough languages to get a job in a travel agency in Stockholm. My father could not get permission to leave Russia after the war, and my mother had learned to prefer the capitalist life and would not go back to join him. I don't think she was too much in love with him. At last there was a divorce, and she married a man with a small hotel in Goteborg, who adopted me so that I could have a passport and travel myself. But soon

after, they were both killed in a car accident."

"I see . . . or do I? Your problem is that you don't know how to run a hotel?"

"No, that is for his own sons. But I thought that my father should be told that she was dead. I wrote to him, and somehow he received the letter—he was still at the University. He wrote back, wanting to know all about me. We began to write often. Now that I didn't even have a mother—I had nobody—it was exciting to discover a real father and try to find out all about him. But then, one day, I got another letter from him which had been smuggled out, which was different from all the others."

The Saint sipped his wine. It was a native Johannisberg Rhonegold, light and bone-dry, the perfect punctuation for the glutinous goodness into which he was dunking.

"How different?"

"He said he could not stand it any more, the way he was living and what he was doing, and he wished he could escape to the West. He asked if I would be ready to help him. Of course I said yes. But how? We exchanged several letters, discussing possibilities, quite apart from the other letters which he went on writing for the censors to read."

"How did you work that?"

"Through the travel agency, it was not so hard to find ways. And at last the opportunity came. He was to be sent to Geneva, to a meeting of the disarmament conference—not to take part himself, but to be on hand to advise the Soviet delegate about scientific questions. It seemed as if everything was solved. He had only to get out of the Soviet embassy, here in Switzerland, and he would be free."

The Saint's gaze was no longer gently quizzical. His blue eyes, many southern shades darker than hers, had hardened as if sapphires were crystallizing in them. He was listening now with both ears and all his mind; but he went on eating with undiminished deference to the cuisine.

"So, what's the score now?"

"I came here to meet him with money, and to help him. When he escaped, of course, he would have nothing. And

he speaks only Russian and Finnish .... But something went wrong."

"What, exactly?"

"I don't know."

Until then, she had been contained, precise, reciting a synopsis that she must have vowed to deliver without emotion, to acquit herself in advance of the charge of being just another hysterical female with helpful hallucinations. But now she was leaning across the table towards him, twisting her fingers together and letting her cold lovely face be distorted into unbecoming lines of tortured anxiety.

"Someone betrayed us. We had to trust many people who carried our letters. Who knows which one? I only know that yesterday, when he was to do it, I waited all day up the street where I could watch the entrance, in a car which I had hired, and in the evening he came out. But not by himself, as we had planned. He was driven out in an embassy car, sitting between two men who looked like gangsters—the secret police! I could only just recognize him, from a recent photograph he had sent me, looking around desperately as if he hoped to see me, as if I could have rescued him."

Her coffee and Benedictine arrived, and Simon said to the waitress: "You can bring me the same, in about five minutes."

He harpooned a prize corner crust and set about mopping the dish clean of the last traces of *fondue*. He said: "You should have got here sooner. There's an old Swiss tradition which says that when *fondue* is being eaten, anyone who loses the bread off their fork has to kiss everyone else at the table. It must make for nice sociable eating .... So what happened?"

"I followed them. It was all I could think of. If I lost him then, I knew I would lose him forever. I thought at first they were taking him to the airport, to send him back to Russia, and I could make a fuss there. But no. They went to Lausanne, then on to here, and then still farther, to a house on the lake, with high walls and guards, and they took him in. Then I went to the police."

"And?"

"They told me they could do nothing. It was part of the Soviet embassy, officially rented for diplomatic purposes, and it could not be touched. The Russians can do whatever they like there, as if they were in Russia. And I know what they are doing. They are keeping my father there until they can send him back to Moscow—and then to Siberia. Unless they kill him first."

"Wouldn't that have been easier from Geneva?"

"There is another airport at Zurich, almost as close from this house, and without the newspaper men who will be at Geneva for the conference."

Letting his eyes wander around the quiet little square, Simon thought that you really had to have a paperback mind to believe tales like that in such as setting. The table where they sat outside the restaurant was under the shade of the awning, but he could have stretched a hand out into the sunshine which made it the kind of summer's day that travel brochures are always photographed on. And gratefully enjoying their full advertised money's worth, tourists of all shapes and sizes and nationalities were rambling back and forth, posing each other for snapshots, plodding in and out of the domed Panorama building opposite to peer (for reasons comprehensible only to tourists and the entrepreneurs who provide such attractions for them) at its depiction of the French general Bourbaki's entry into Switzerland in 1871 on a scale that seems somewhat disproportionate to the historic importance of that event, or trudging up the hill to gawk at the Lion Memorial carved in the rock to commemorate the Swiss mercenaries who died in Paris with unprofitable heroism defending the Tuileries against the French Revolution, or to the Glacier Garden above that which preserves the strange natural sculpture of much more ancient turnings—all with their minds happily emptied of everything but the perennial vacation problem of paying for their extra extravagances and souvenirs. Not one of them, probably, would have believed in this plot unless they saw it at home on television. But the Saint knew perhaps better than any

man living how thinly the crust of peace and normalcy covered volcanic lavas everywhere in the modern world.

He turned back to Irma Jorovitch, and his voice was just as tolerantly good-humored as it had been ever since she had intruded herself with her grisly reminder of what to him were only the facts of life. He said: "And you think it should be a picnic for me to rescue him."

She said: "Not a picnic. No. But if any man on earth can do it, you can."

"You know, you could be right. But I was trying to take a holiday from all that."

"If you would want money," she said, "I have nothing worth your time to offer. But I could try to get it. I would do anything—*anything*!"

It was altogether disgraceful, but he could do nothing to inhibit an inward reflex of response except try not to think about it.

"Gentleman adventurers aren't supposed to take advantage of offers like that," he said, with unfeigned regret.

"You must help me," she said again. "Please."

He sighed.

"All right," he said. "I suppose I must."

Her face lit up with a gladness that did the same things for it that the Aurora Borealis does to the arctic snows. It was a reaction that he had seen many times, as if his mere consent to have a bash had vaporized all barriers. It would have been fatally intoxicating if he ever forgot how precariously, time after time, he had succeeded in justifying so much faith.

"It isn't done yet, darling," he reminded her. "Tell me more about this house."

It was on the southern shore of the Vierwaldstattersee, he learned, the more rugged and less accessible side which rises to the mingled tripper-traps and tax dodgers chalets of Burgenstock, and by land it was reachable only by a second-to-secondary road which served nothing but a few other similarly isolated hermitages. Although it was dark when she passed it, she was sure there was no other resi-

dence nearby, so that anyone approaching in daylight would certainly be under observation long before he got close. The walls around the grounds were about seven feet high, topped with barbed wire, but with slits that the inmates could peep through—to say nothing of what electronic devices might augment their vigilance. Added to which, she had heard dogs barking as she drove past.

"Nothing to it," said the Saint—"if I hadn't forgotten to bring my invisible and radar-proof helicopter."

"You will think of something," she said with rapturous confidence.

He lighted a cigarette and meditated for almost a minute.

"You say this house is right on the lake?"

"Yes. Because at the next turning I passed, my headlights showed the water."

"Do you think you could recognize it again, from the lake side?"

"I think so."

"Good. Then let's take a little boat ride."

He paid the bill, finishing his coffee while he waited for the change. Then they walked down the Lowenstrasse and across the tree-shaded promenades of the Nationalquai to the lake front. Just a few yards to the left there was a small marina offering a variety of water craft for hire, which he had already casually scouted without dreaming that he would ever use it in this way. With the same kind of companionship, perhaps, but not for this kind of mission ....

The Saint chose a small but comfortably upholstered runabout, the type of boat that would automatically catch the eye of a man who was out to impress a pretty girl—and that was precisely how he wanted them to be categorized by anyone who had a motive for studying them closely. Taking advantage of the weather and the informal customs of the country, he was wearing only a pair of light slacks and a tartan sport shirt, and Irma was dressed in a simple white blouse and gaily patterned dirndl, so that there was nothing except their own uncommon faces to differentiate them

from any other holiday-taking twosome.

And as he aimed the speedboat diagonally southeastwards across the lake, with the breeze of their own transit tousling her short white-blonde hair and molding the filmy blouse like a tantalizing second skin against the thrusting mounds of her breasts, he had leisure to wish that they had been brought together by nothing more preemptive than one of those random holiday magnetisms which provide inexhaustible grist for the world's marriage and divorce mills in self-compensating proportions.

She had put on a pair of sunglasses when they left the restaurant, and out on the water the light was strong enough for Simon to take out a pair of his own which had been tucked in his shirt pocket. But they would be useful for more than protection against the glare.

"Get the most out of these cheaters when we start looking for the house," he told her as he put them on. "Don't turn your head and look at anything directly: just turn your eyes and keep facing somewhere else. Anybody watching us won't be able to tell what we're really looking at."

"You think of everything. I will try to remember."

"About how far did you drive out of Lucerne to this house?"

"I cannot be sure. It seemed quite far, but the road was winding."

This was so femininely vague that he resigned himself to covering the entire southern shore if necessary. On such an afternoon, and with such a comely companion, it was a martyrdom which he could endure with beatific stoicism. Having reached the nearest probable starting point which he had mentally selected, he cut the engine down to a smooth idling gait and steered parallel to the meandering coast line, keeping a distance of about a hundred yards from the shore.

"Relax, Irma," he said. "Any house that's on this stretch of lake, we'll see. Meanwhile, we should look as if we're just out for the ride."

To improve this visual effect, he lowered himself from his

hot-water-rodder's perch on the gunwhale to the cushion behind the wheel, and she snuggled up to him.

"Like this?" she asked seriously.

"More or less," he approved, with fragile gravity, and slipped an arm around her shoulders.

It was only when they had passed Kehrsiten, the landing where the funicular takes off up the sheer palisade to the hotels of Burgenstock on its crest, that he began to wonder if she had overestimated her ability to identify the house to which Karel Jorovitch had been taken from an aspect which she had never seen. But he felt no change of tension in her as the boat purred along for some kilometers after that, until suddenly she stiffened and clutched him—but with the magnificent presence of mind to turn towards him instead of to the shore.

"There, I have seen it!" she gasped. "The white house with the three tall chimneys! I remember them!"

He looked to his right, over her flaxen head, which had a disconcertingly pure smell that reminded him somehow of new-mown hay, and saw the only edifice she could have been referring to.

The tingle that went through him was an involuntary psychic-somatic acknowledgement that the adventure had now become real, and that he was well and truly hooked.

In order to study the place thoroughly and unhurriedly, he turned toward Irma, folded her tenderly in his arms, and applied his lips to hers. In that position, he could continue to keep his eyes on the house whilst giving the appearance of being totally preoccupied with radically unconnected pursuits.

It was surprisingly unpretentious, for a diplomatic enclave. He would have taken it for a large old-fashioned family house—or a house for a large old-fashioned family, according to the semantic preference of the phrase-maker. At any rate, it was not a refurbished mansion or a small reconverted hotel. Its most unusual feature was what she had already mentioned: the extraordinarily high wire-topped garden walls which came down at a respectable distance on

both sides of it—not merely to the lake edge, but extending about twelve feet out into the water. And for the further discouragement of anyone who might still have contemplated going around them, those two barriers were joined by a rope linking a semicircle of small bright red buoys such as might have marked the limits of a safe bathing area, but which also served to bar an approach to the shore by boat—even if they were not anchored to some underwater obstruction which would have made access altogether impossible.

And on the back porch of the house, facing the lake, a square-shouldered man in a deck chair raised a pair of binoculars and examined them lengthily.

Simon was able to make all these observations in spite of the fact that Irma Jorovitch was cooperating in his camouflage with an ungrudging enthusiasm which was no aid at all to concentration.

Finally, they came to a small headland beyond which there was a cove into which he could steer the boat out of sight of the watcher on the porch. Only then did the Saint release her, not without reluctance, and switched off the engine to become crisply business-like again.

"Excuse the familiarity," he said. "But you know why I had to do it."

"I liked it, too," she said demurely.

As the boat drifted to a stop, Simon unstrapped his wristwatch and laid it on the deck over the dashboard. He held his pen upright beside it to cast a shadow from the sun, and turned the watch to align the hour hand with the shadow, while Irma watched fascinated.

"Now, according to my boy-scout training, halfway between the hour hand and twelve o'clock on the dial is due south," he explained. "I need a bearing on this place, to be able to come straight to it the next time—and at night."

From there he could no longer see anything useful of Lucerne. But across the lake, on the north side, he spotted the high peaked roof of the Park Hotel of Viznau and settled on that as a landmark with multiple advantages. He sighted

on it several times, until he was satisfied that he had established an angle accurately enough for any need he would have.

"This is all we can do right now," he said. "In broad daylight, we wouldn't have a prayer of getting him out. I don't even know what the odds will be after dark, but I'll try to think of some way to improve them."

The beautiful cold face—which he had discovered could be anything but cold at contact range—was strained and entreating.

"But what if they take him away before tonight?"

"Then we'll have lost a bet," he said grimly. "We could hustle back to Lucerne, get a car, come back here by road—I could find the place now, all right—and mount guard until they try to drive away with him. Then we could try an interception and rescue—supposing he isn't already gone, or they don't take him away even before we get back. On the other hand, they might keep him here for a week, and how could we watch all that time? Instead of waiting, we could be breaking in tonight .... It's the kind of choice that generals are paid and pilloried for making."

She held her head in her hands.

"What can I say?"

Simon Templar prodded the starter button and turned the wheel to point the little speedboat back towards Lucerne.

"You'll have to make up your own mind, Irma," he said relentlessly. "It's your father. You tell me, and we'll play it in your key."

There was little conversation on the return drive. The decision could only be left to her. He did not want to influence it, and he was glad it was not up to him, for either alternative seemed to have the same potentiality of being as catastrophically wrong as the other.

When he had brought the boat alongside the dock and helped her out, he said simply: "Well?"

"Tonight," she replied resolutely. "That is the way it must be."

"How did you decide?"

"As you would have, I think. If the nearest man on the dock when we landed wore a dark shirt, I would say 'Tonight.' It was a way of tossing up, without a coin. How else could I choose?"

Simon turned to the man in the blue jersey who was nearest, who was securing the boat to its mooring rings.

"Could we reserve it again tonight?" he inquired in German. "The Fraulein would like to take a run in the moonlight."

"At what time?" asked the attendant, unmoved by romantic visions. "Usually I close up at eight."

"At about nine," said the Saint, ostentatiously unfolding a hundred-franc note from his wad. "I will give you two more of these when I take the boat. And you need not wait for us. I will tie it up safely when we come back."

"*Jawohl, mein Herr!*" agreed the man, with alacrity. "Whenever you come, at nine or later, I shall be here."

Simon and Irma walked back over the planking to the paved promenade where natives and visitors were now crisscrossing, at indicatively different speeds, on their homeward routes. The sun had already dropped below the high horizons to the west, and the long summer twilight would soon begin.

"Suppose we succeed in this crazy project," he said. "Have you thought about what we do next?"

"My father will be free. I will book passage on a plane and take him back to Sweden with me."

"Your father will be free, but will you? And will I? Or for how long? Has it occurred to you, sweetheart, that the Swiss government takes a notoriously dim view of piratical operations on their nice neutral soil, even with the best of motives? And the Russkis won't hesitate to howl their heads off at this violation of their extraterritorial rights."

Her step faltered, and she caught his arm.

"I am so stupid," she said humbly. "I should have thought of that. Instead, I was asking you to become a criminal, to the Swiss government, instead of a hero. Forgive me." Then she looked up at him in near terror.

"Will you give it up because of that?"

He shook his head, with a shrug and a wry smile. "I've been in trouble before. I'm always trying to keep out of it, but Fate seems to be agin me."

"Through the travel agency, perhaps I can arrange something to help us to get away. Let me go back to my hotel and make some telephoning."

"Where are you staying?"

"A small hotel, down that way." She pointed vaguely in the general direction of the Schwanenplatz and the older town which lies along the river under the ancient walls which protected it five centuries ago. "It is all I can afford," she said defensively. "I suppose you are staying here? Or at the Palace?"

They were at the corner of Grand National and the Haldenstrasse.

"Here. It's the sort of place where travel bureaux like yours send people like me," he murmured. "So you go home and see what you can organize, and I'll see what I can work out myself. Meet me back here at seven. I'm in room 129." He flagged a taxi which came cruising by. "Dress up prettily for dinner, but nothing fussy—and bring a sweater, because it'll be chilly later on that lake."

This time he didn't have to take advantage of a situation. She put up her lips with a readiness which left no doubt as to how far she would have been willing to develop the contact in a less public place.

"See you soon," he said, and closed the taxi door after her, thoughtfully.

He had a lot to think about.

Without unchivalrously depreciating the value of any ideas she might have or phone calls she could make, he would not have been the Saint if he could have relied on them without some independent backing of his own. He had softened in many ways, over the years, but not to the extent of leaving himself entirely in the hands of any female, no matter how entrancing.

By seven o'clock, when she arrived, he had some of the an-

swers; but his plan only went to a certain point, and he could not project beyond that.

"I think I've figured a way to get into that house," he told her. "And if the garrison isn't too large and lively, we may get out again with your father. But what happens after that depends on how hot the hue and cry may be."

She put down her sweater and purse on one of the beds—she had found her way to his room unannounced, and knocked on the door, and when he opened it she had been there.

"I have been telephoning about that, as I promised," she said. "I have arranged for a hired car and a driver to be at the other end of the lake, closer to the house than this, and just about as close to Zurich. He will drive us to the airport. Then, I have ordered through the travel agency to have a small private plane waiting to fly us all out."

"A private charter plane—how nice and simple," he murmured. "But can you afford it?"

"Of course not. I told them it was for a very rich invalid, with his private nurse and doctor. That will be you and I. When we are in Sweden and they give us the bill, I shall have to explain everything, and I shall lose my job, but my father will be safe and they cannot bring us back."

He laughed with honest admiration.

"You're quite amazing."

"Did I do wrong?" She was crestfallen like a child that has been suddenly turned on, in fear of a slap.

"No, I mean it. You worked all that out while you were changing your clothes and fixing your hair, and you make it sound so easy and obvious. Which it is—now you've told me. But I recognize genius when I see it. And what a lot of footling obstacles disappear when it isn't hampered by scruples!"

"How can I have them when I must save my father's life? But what you have to do is still harder. What is your plan?"

"I'll tell you at dinner."

In an instant she was all feminity again.

"Do I look all right?"

She invited inspection with a ballerina's pirouette. She had put on a simple wool dress that matched her eyes and molded her figure exactly where it should, without vulgar ostentation but clearly enough to be difficult to stop looking at. The Saint did not risk rupturing himself from such an effort.

"You're only sensational," he assured her. "If you weren't, I wouldn't be hooked on this caper."

"Please?"

"I wouldn't be chancing a bullet or a jail sentence to help you."

"I know. How can I thank you?" She reached out and took his right hand in both of hers. "Only to tell you my heart will never forget."

With an impulsively dramatic gesture, she drew his hand to her and placed it directly over her heart. The fact that a somewhat less symbolic organ intervened did not seem to occur to her, but it imposed on him some of the same restraint that a seismograph would require to remain unmoved at the epicenter of an earthquake.

"Don't I still have to earn that?" said the Saint, with remarkable mildness.

When they got to the Mignon Grill at the Palace Hotel on the other side of the Kursaal ("I promised Dino last night I'd come in for his special Lobster Thermidor, before I had any idea what else I'd be doing tonight," Simon explained, "but anyhow we should have one more good meal before they put us on bread and water.") he told her how he was hoping to carry out the abduction; and once again she was completely impersonal and businesslike, listening with intense attention.

"I think it could work," she said at the end, nodding with preternatural gravity. "Unless .... There is one thing you may not have thought of."

"There could be a dozen," he admitted. "Which one have you spotted?"

"Suppose they have already begun to brainwash him—so that he does not trust us."

Simon frowned.

"Do you think they could?"

"You know how everyone in a Soviet trial always pleads guilty and begs to be punished? They have some horrible secret method .... If they have done it to him, he might not even want to be rescued."

"That would make it a bit sticky," he said reflectively. "I wonder how you unbrainwash somebody?"

"Only a psychologist would know. But first we must get him to one. If it is like that, you must not hesitate because of me. If you must knock him out, I promise not to become silly and hysterical."

"That'll help anyway," said the Saint grimly.

The baby lobsters were delicious, and he was blessed with the nerveless appetite to enjoy every bite. In fact, the prospect that lay ahead was a celestial seasoning that no chef could have concocted from all the herbs and spices in his pharmacopeia.

But the time came when anticipation could not be prolonged any more and had to attain reality. They walked back to the Grand National, and he picked up a bag which he had left at the hall porter's desk when they went out. It was one of those handy zippered plastic bags with a shoulder strap which airlines emblazon with their insignia and distribute to overseas passengers to be stuffed with all those odds and ends which travellers never seem able to get into their ordinary luggage, and Simon had packed it with requisites for their expedition which would have been fatal to the elegant drape of his coat if he had tried to crowd all of them into various pockets. The boat was waiting at the marina, and in a transition that seemed to flow with the smoothness of a cinematic effect, they were aboard and on their way into the dark expanse of the lake.

Simon followed the shore line to Viznau before he turned away to the right. From his bag he had produced a hiker's luminous compass, with the aid of which he was able to set a sufficiently accurate course to retrace the makeshift bearing he had taken that afternoon between his wrist watch and

the sun. He opened the throttle, and the boat lifted gently and skimmed. Irma Jorovitch put on her cardigan and buttoned it, keeping down in the shelter of the windshield. They no longer talked, for it would only have been idle chatter.

The water was liquid glass, dimpling lazily to catch the reflection of a light or a star, except where the wake stretched behind like a trail of swift-melt snow. Above the blackness ahead, the twinkling facades of Burgenstock high against the star-powdered sky were a landmark this time to be kept well towards the starboard beam. Halfway across, as best he could judge it, he broke the first law by switching off the running lights, but there were no other boats out there to threaten a collision. Then, when the scattered lights on the shore ahead drew closer, he slackened speed again to let the engine noise sink to a soothing purr that would have been scarcely audible from the shore, or at least vague enough to seem distant and unalarming.

He thought he should have earned full marks for navigation. The three tall chimneys that he had to find rose black against the Milky Way as he came within perception range of curtained windows glowing dimly over the starboard bow, and he cruised softly on beyond them into the cove where he had paused on the afternoon reconnaissance.

This time, however, he let the boat drift all the way in to the shore where his cat's eyes could pick out a tiny promontory that was almost as good as a private pier. He jumped off as the bow touched, carrying the anchor, which he wedged down into a crevice to hold the boat snugly against the land.

Back in the boat, he stripped quickly down to the swimming trunks which he had worn under his clothes. From the airline bag he took a pair of wire-cutting pliers, and one of those bulky "pocket" knives equipped with a small toolshop of gadgets besides the conventional blades, which he stuffed securely under the waistband of his trunks. Then came a flashlight, which he gave to Irma, and a small automatic pistol.

"Do you know how to use this, if you have to?" he asked.

"Yes. And I shall not be afraid to. I have done a lot of shooting—for sport."

"The safety catch is here."

He gave her the gun and guided her thumb to feel it.

She put it in her bag, and then he helped her ashore.

"The road has to be over there," he said, "and it has to take you to the gates which you saw from your car. You can't possibly go wrong. And you remember what we worked out. Your car has broken down, and you want to use their phone to call a garage."

"How could I forget? And when they don't want to let me in, I shall go on talking and begging as long as I can."

"I'm sure you can keep them listening for a while, at any rate. Is your watch still the same as mine?" They put their wrists together and she turned on the flashlight for an instant. "Good. Just give me until exactly half-past before you go into action .... Good luck!"

"Good luck," she said, and her arms went around him and her lips searched for his once more before he turned away.

The water that he waded into was cold enough to quench any wistful ardor that might have distracted his concentration from the task ahead. He swam very hard, to stimulate his circulation until his system had struck a balance with the chill, out and around the western arm of the little bay. And then, as he curved his course towards the house with the three chimneys, he slackened his pace to reduce the churning sounds of motion, until by the time he was within earshot of anyone in the walled garden, he was sliding through the water as silently as an otter.

By that time, his eyes had accommodated to the darkness so thoroughly that he could see one of the dogs sniffing at a bush at one corner of the back porch, but he did not see any human sentinel. And presently the dog trotted off around the side of the house without becoming aware of his presence.

Simon touched the rope connecting two of the marker-

buoys enclosing the private beach, feeling around it with a touch like a feather, but he could detect no wire intertwined with it. If there were any alarm device connected with it, therefore, it was probably something mechanically attached to the ends which would be activated by any tug on the rope. The Saint took great care not to do this as he cut through it with the blade of his boy-scout knife.

But hardly a hand's breadth below the surface of the water, making the passage too shallow to swim through, his delicately exploring fingers traced a barrier of stout wire netting supported by the buoys and stretched between their moorings, which would have rudely halted any small boat that tried to shoot in to the shore. He could feel that the wire was bare, apparently not electrified. But just in case it might also be attached to some warning trigger, he touched it no less gingerly as he used his wire cutters to snip out a section large enough to let him float through.

The luminous dial of his watch showed that he still had almost five minutes to spare from the time he had allowed himself. He waited patiently, close to the projecting side wall, until the first dog barked on the other side of the house.

A moment later, the other one chimed in.

A man came out of the back door and descended the verandah steps, peering to left and right in the direction of the lake. But coming from the lighted house, it would have to take several minutes for his pupils to dilate sufficiently for his retinas to detect a half-submerged dark head drifting soundlessly shorewards in the star-shadow of the wall. Secure in that physiological certainty, the Saint paddled silently on into the lake bank, using only his hands like fins and making no more disturbance than a roving fish.

Apparently satisfied that there was no threat from that side, the man turned and started back up the porch steps.

Simon slithered out of the water as noiselessly as a snake and darted after him. The man had no more than set one foot on the verandah when the Saint's arm whipped around his throat from behind and tightened with a subtle but ex-

pert pressure ....

As the man went limp, Simon lowered him quietly to the boards. Then he swiftly peeled off his victim's jacket and trousers and put them on himself. They were a scarecrow fit, but for once the Saint was not thinking of appearances. His main object was to confuse the watchdogs' sense of smell.

The back door was still slightly ajar, and if there were any alarms wired to it, the guard must have switched them off before he opened it. The Saint went through without hesitation and found himself in a large old-fashioned kitchen. Another door on the opposite side logically led to the main entrance hall. Past the staircase was the front door of the house, which was also ajar, meaning that another guard had gone out to investigate the disturbance at the entrance gate. The Saint crossed the hall like a hasty ghost and went out after him.

The dogs were still barking vociferously in spite of having already aroused the attention they were supposed to, as is the immoderate habit of dogs, and their redundant clamor was ear-splitting enough to have drowned much louder noises than the Saint's barefoot approach. One of them did look over its shoulder at him as he came down the drive, but it was deceived as he had hoped it would be by the familiar scent of his borrowed clothing and by the innocuous direction from which he came. It turned and resumed its blustering baying at Irma, who was pleading with the burly man who stood inside the gate.

The whole scene was almost too plainly illuminated under the glare of an overhead floodlight; but the man was completely preoccupied with what was in front of him, doubtfully twirling a large iron key around a stubby forefinger as Simon came up behind him and slashed one hand down on the back of his neck with a sharp smacking sound. The man started to turn, from pure reflex, and could have seen the Saint's hand raised again for a lethal follow-up before his eyes rolled up and he crumpled where he stood. The dogs stopped yapping at last and licked him happily, en-

joying the game, as Simon took the key from him and put it in the massive lock. Antique as it looked, its tumblers turned with the smoothness of fresh oil, and Simon pulled the gate open.

"How wonderful!" she breathed. "I was afraid to believe you could really do it."

"I wasn't certain myself, but I had to find out."

"But why . . . . " She fingered the sleeve that reached only halfway between his elbow and his wrist.

"I'll explain another time," he said. "Come on—but be quiet, in case there are any more of them."

She tiptoed with him back to the house. The hallway was deathly still, the silent emptiness of the ground floor emphasized by the metronome ticking of a clock. Simon touched her and pointed upwards, and she climbed the stairs behind him.

The upper landing was dark, so that a thin strip of light underlining one door helpfully indicated the only occupied room. The Saint took out his knife again and opened the longest blade, holding it ready for lightning use as a silent weapon if the door proved to be unlocked—which it did. He felt no resistance to a tentative fractional pressure after he had stealthily turned the doorknob. He balanced himself, flung it open, and went in.

The only occupant, a pale shock-headed man in trousers and shirtsleeves, shrank back in the chair where he sat, staring.

"Professor Jorovitch, I presume?" said the Saint unoriginally.

Irma brushed past him.

"Papa!" she cried.

Jorovitch's eyes dilated, fixed on the automatic that Simon had lent her, which waved in her hand as if she had forgotten she had it. Bewilderment and terror were the only expressions on his face.

Irma turned frantically to the Saint.

"You see, they have done it!" she wailed. "Just as I was afraid. We must get him away. Quick—do what you have to!"

Simon Templar shook his head slowly.

"No," he said. "I can't do that."

She stared at him.

"Why? You promised .... "

"No, I didn't, exactly. But you did your best to plant the idea in my head. Unfortunately, that was after I'd decided there was something wrong with your story. I was bothered by the language you used, like 'the capitalist life,' and always carefully saying 'Soviet' where most people say 'Russian,' and saying that hearing my name was 'like winning a big prize' instead of calling it a miracle or an answer to a prayer, as most people brought up on this side of the Curtain would do. And being so defensive about your hotel. And then, when we came over this afternoon, I noticed there was no Russian flag flying here, as there would be on diplomatic property."

"You're mad," she whispered.

"I was, rather," he admitted, "when I suspected you might be trying to con me into doing your dirty work for you. So I called an old acquaintance of mine in the local police, to check on some of the facts."

The gun in her hand levelled and cracked.

The Saint blinked but did not stagger. He reached out and grabbed her hand as she squeezed the trigger again, twisting the automatic out of her fingers.

"It's only loaded with blanks," he explained apologetically. "I thought it was safer to plant that on you rather than risk having you produce a gun of your own, with real bullets in it."

"A very sensible precaution," said a gentle new voice.

It belonged to a short, rotund man in a porkpie hat, with a round face and round-rimmed glasses, who emerged with as much dignity as possible from the partly open door of the wardrobe.

Simon said, "May I introduce Inspector Oscar Kleinhaus? He was able to tell me the true story—that Karel Jorovitch had already defected, weeks ago, and had been given asylum without any publicity, and that he was living here with

a guard of Swiss security officers until he completed all the information he could give about the Russian espionage apparatus in Switzerland. Oscar allowed me to go along with your gag for a while—partly to help you convict yourself beyond any hope of a legal quibble, and partly as an exercise to check the protection arrangements."

"Which apparently leave something to be desired," Kleinhaus observed mildly.

"But who would have thought it'd be me they had to keep out?" Simon consoled him magnanimously.

The two guards from the back and the front of the house came in from the landing, looking physically none the worse for wear but somewhat sheepish—especially the one who was clad only in his underthings.

"They weren't told anything about my plan, only that they were going to be tested," Simon explained, as he considerately shucked off and returned the borrowed garments. "But they were told that if I snuck close enough to grab them or slap them, they were to assume they could just as well have been killed, and to fall down and play dead. We even thought of playing out the abduction all the way to Zurich."

"That would have been going too far," Kleinhaus said. "But I would like to know what was to happen if you got away from here."

"She said she'd arranged for a car to pick us up at Brunnen, and there would be a light plane waiting for a supposed invalid at the Zurich airport—which would have taken him at least as far as East Germany."

"They will be easy to pick up," Kleinhaus sighed. "Take her away."

She spat at the Saint as the guards went to her, and would have clawed his eyes if they had not held her efficiently.

"I'm sorry, darling," the Saint said to her. "I'm sorry it had to turn out like this. I liked your story much better."

The irony was that he meant it. And that she would never believe him. ST

JOE L. HENSLEY

Joe Hensley, a circuit court judge, is also a fine, imaginative writer of both short stories and novels. He has a special feeling for people—their problems, their emotions, their determination—and for justice.

In his chiller, TOURIST, Hensley introduces Cannert, a most unusual and sympathetic "hero"—one you'd treasure as a close friend . . . maybe!

TOURIST

Cannert came upon the motel after still another day of driving. The motel was off the interstate on a secondary road. It wasn't much different from others he'd seen and decided against, except it seemed well kept and was freshly painted.

Martha's last card had come from Lake City, two-hundred-plus miles away. She liked back roads, clean quiet places, easy driving.

He dug out a map from the cluttered glove compartment of the Ford and unfolded it. He was north of Jax, but still in Florida, and within driving range of Lake City.

Beyond the motel, Cannert could see and smell the ocean. The long, low building was far from new, but it was white-tile roofed and attractive, the kind of small place Martha would have been drawn to. Cannert counted the units. There were twenty-eight.

There was a sign at the highway entrance. It read, "Mom's Motel. Singles $14, Doubles $18." Below, in smaller letters, "Weekly Rates." A small neon "Vacancy" sign glowed.

Martha might have seen the sign if she'd passed this way, Cannert thought. He'd sent her on south to scout for a place months back, while he was still in the hospital. It had been a mistake to let her leave without him. He was almost

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sure now that she was dead. It was possible she'd just left him, given him up as a futile job, but he didn't believe so.

He parked the Ford in front of the office unit and got slowly out. From the inlet behind the motel there came a sharp, fish smell. White gulls wheeled and flashed over the water.

Two people, a man and a woman, watched him into the office, inspecting him. The man put down his newspaper and Cannert saw the familiar headlines he'd read yesterday in Jacksonville. Two days back and several hundred miles away, near Live Oak, an unknown, possibly demented, rifleman had conducted target practice on the office of a motel about the size of this one, killing two, wounding one. Cannert supposed that had made many motel managers suspicious.

"Could I see a room?" he inquired gently.

The man nodded, relaxing a bit. He was a big, fleshy man, not yet old, but not young. He was much larger than Cannert.

"You sure can, sir. You'll find our place clean and respectable. We even have a pool if you like to swim." His voice had a touch of New England in it.

The woman went back to the book she'd been reading. Her eyes had shrewdly estimated Cannert and his probable worth and been unimpressed.

Cannert followed the big man down a well-weeded walk. Like many heavy men, the motel man's step was light.

The room Cannert was shown was acceptable. Sunlight came through a clean west window. The bedspread was faded, but immaculate. The towels in the bath were thinning, but still serviceable. There was a quiet window air conditioner.

Cannert nodded his approval and followed the fat man back to the office. "I'll stay a week. Perhaps even longer if the fishing around here's as good as I've heard it is."

"Try the pier near Citadel City, five miles south," the motel man advised amiably. "Or you can rent a boat in town." He shrugged. "I'm not a fisherman, but I hear it's okay."

Cannert looked out the office window. Only a few other cars were parked in front of units and it was late in the day.

"Looks as if business isn't so good."

The motel man gave him a sharp glance. "We make do all right. Times are hard. This is better than welfare, and lots better than being cold. Took Em and me five years down here to get the damned Maine cold out of our bones." He shook his head. "We'll never go back."

"Is your pool salt or fresh?"

"Salt. Can't afford fresh water these days." He appraised Cannert. "Eighty dollars for a week?"

"Done," Cannert said. He took out a worn billfold and paid, letting the man see the thick sheaf of currency inside.

Cannert had hoped for a registration book so he could check for Martha's name, but was handed a card instead. He filled it out and signed it "William T. Jones." The motel man inspected it and raised his eyebrows a fraction.

"Sure are a lot of Jones boys in this hard world," he said, not smiling.

Cannert nodded. "The 'T.' stands for Thurman. The kind of Jones you need to watch is the kind who comes with a woman and a bottle of liquor. I'm alone. I will be—all week. The only thing I drink is a bit of Canadian on special occasions." He looked around the Spartan office. "Where's closest and best to eat?"

"There's restaurants in town and there's a good one across from the pier right before you get to Citadel City." The motel man looked down at the card, and Cannert saw him then look out the office window to check the license number written on the card against the plate on the back of the Ford. Cannert smiled. Both were the same.

"Thanks," Cannert said shortly.

"Glad to have you with us, Mr. Jones," the motel man said appeasingly. He extended a heavy hand. "Name's Ed Bradford. The wife you saw when you arrived is Emma. Been here eleven years now. Trying to make do in lean times."

Cannert smiled and shook hands. "I understand about being cold. I'm out of Chicago. Retired a few months back.

There was nothing and no one left to keep me in Illinois, so I'm wandering around, doing what I like." He nodded. "Golf some, fish some."

"You'll like the fishing hereabouts," Bradford said, "but there's no golf courses close." He went back to alertly watching the semideserted road out front, waiting patiently.

Cannert left the office. He unloaded his bags and golf clubs from the car, leaving only the fishing gear. He then drove to the edge of the small town a few miles away. It was now almost dark, too late to fish, but he found the restaurant near the pier and ate pleasantly enough there. Fishing talk came from nearby booths and he listened. He tipped the waitress the correct amount and played the role he knew best, remaining unnoticed.

When he departed, it was full, moonless dark outside. He drove back to the motel. There was only one new tourist car parked in front of a unit. Five rented, twenty-three vacant. A few children splashed in the dimly illuminated pool.

Cannert entered his room. He drew the shades and checked things over. Someone had gone through his bags. Only a watchful man would have noticed, but Cannert was careful. The roll of one-ounce gold Maple Leafs he'd left on one side of a bag was tilted wrong. Some of his clothes had been subtly moved around, then smoothed back.

Cannert turned out his lights and undressed. He smiled in the darkness. He felt Martha was very close to him here. Losing her had put purpose into what was left of life.

He hurt, so he took a strong pill.

He then slept deeply, without dreams.

The next morning he went again to the pier. He ate scrambled eggs and toast and then fished the day away. He was an indifferent fisherman, but a man had to fit into some mold. What he caught he gave away or threw back in when he was certain he wasn't observed.

He skipped lunch but ate an early dinner and drove back to the motel. Again, there were only a few tourist cars.

He went to his room and changed into his bathing suit

and then walked slowly to the pool. A few children frolicked in the water, watched by their parents. The weather was muggy. Cannert put a cautious toe in the pool. The water was as warm as blood.

Ed Bradford came outside the office and watched him, smiling a little.

"How's the fishing?" he asked.

"Pretty fair," Cannert said. "I caught a few good ones, but I gave them away. Would you want any fish if I catch them tomorrow?"

Bradford nodded. "On one conditon. This place will be dead tomorrow night. Sundays are. You bring the fish, and Em will cook for us. Maybe we could even have a drink of Canadian first?"

Cannert smiled. "That would be fine. You're very kind to a cold country stranger."

"A kindred spirit," Bradford said, still watching him. Cannert saw he'd noticed the long scar that ran down from upper belly to a hiding place deep in the swim trunks.

"That looks like a bad one."

"Car wreck," Cannert lied. "Slid on the ice. Lucky to be alive." It was, in truth, the place where they'd last opened him after the chemotherapy had failed and the radiation treatments had ended. They'd opened and then sewed him back, then given him the terminal news.

In the morning, Cannert left early. Only two tourist cars remained. Cannert drove for about a mile, found a turn-off spot, and parked his Ford behind a billboard. He walked back up the beach toward the motel.

From a vantage point behind a hummock of sand, he waited until the last tourist car had departed. Then he watched. In a while, Ed Bradford and his wife came out. They put a sign in the office window and then chugged off in a late model Chevrolet.

Cannert patiently waited them out of sight and then walked to the motel. He checked the guest rooms and the office as he walked to his own room, but there was no one.

He turned back. The sign on the office door read, "Gone to church. Closed all day today."

The office door was locked, but Cannert found a window which squeakily came up. He entered and searched quickly through the office. The safe was locked, but he had no real interest in it anyway. He wanted, most of all, to see the registration cards of those who'd come before him, but a quick search failed to turn them up.

He did find several things. In the kitchen, hidden behind the salt and flour, there was a small can of strychnine. Cannert opened it. About half was left. He emptied the can into a toilet and flushed it away. He filled the can back to the same level with salt. The salt didn't closely resemble the strychnine, but it was the closest thing he could find.

He put the can back and prowled some more. He found a .38 caliber revolver in a drawer. It was old and rusty, but loaded with fresh-looking ammunition. Cannert left it loaded but knocked the firing pin off with a hammer he found in the kitchen. He took the firing pin with him when he left and dropped it in the sand near where he'd parked his car.

The exercise of walking and the excitement of breaking in had tired him so that he felt slightly faint. He took another strong pill and rested. He got out his vial of sleeping pills and broke up a dozen of them. He took the remainder and put them in his shirt pocket, then ground the broken bits into fine powder and put the powder back in the vial. All the time he was doing the grinding, he kept watch from his hiding place. When he saw Ed and Emma go past in their car, he waited until they vanished and then pulled his Ford out and went to the pier.

He wondered if he'd figured out what they had in store for him and hoped he had. If not, life was a gamble he was already losing.

Fishing was good at the pier. He caught three decent fish and put them on a stringer in his bucket.

Once, during the long afternoon when his stomach had quieted, he got a sandwich from the restaurant and then drove back to the pull-off place. He ate the sandwich and

then walked the sands back to his hummock where he could check the motel. The Bradford car was parked behind the office, and there were no other cars. Out front, the neon "no vacancy" sign glowed.

There was nothing else, but he knew they were in there waiting. Cannert smiled.

He returned to his car and drove once more to the fishing pier. Other fishermen around him talked about the weather and the fishing, but he mostly ignored them, waiting patiently for the afternoon to pass. When it was time to return to the motel, he filled the Ford with gas and also had an attendant fill the emergency five-gallon can he kept in the trunk.

Martha, maybe this time I've found you.

The church sign had been removed from the office door when he returned, but the "no vacancy" sign still glowed. Cannert parked his car near the office and waved at Ed Bradford, who sat porcinely in khakis beside the pool.

Emma came out, smiling, and Cannert reflected that it was the first time he'd witnessed her with that expression. She took the fish he'd cleaned before he left the pier and vanished with them into the office.

Ed Bradford pointed at a bottle of good Canadian whiskey and a bucket of ice.

"Build yourself a drink," he said affably. "There's water for mix, or I can get you something from the Coke machine."

"Water's fine."

"Sit here, next to me. Tell me more about yourself. Tell me about how cold it was in Chicago." He smiled engagingly.

Cannert mixed a light drink and brought it to the pool. He sat in a chair near Bradford and rambled for a time. It was a story he'd told before. Some of it was true. There was no one for him now—no wife, no child, no brothers or sisters. He admitted to Bradford some of the truth about the long scar on his belly. He detailed the treatments and said he was now waiting out the time to see if they'd stopped the thing which grew inside. The last was a new lie. The an-

swer was known.

They sipped their drinks companionably and watched the sun fall in the sky. Once, Emma came to the pool.

"Dinner in a few minutes," she said, smiling again at Cannert. "Do you drink coffee, Mr. Jones? Or tea?"

"Coffee—hot, black, and strong," Cannert said.

The answer widened her smile.

Ed Bradford kept adding to Cannert's drink, but Cannert was careful to sip it slowly.

When the sun was almost gone, they moved to the rooms behind the office. The kitchen table bore lighted candles. There was a festive bottle of wine.

"Let me open that for you," Cannert said jovially, seizing the opportunity. "Wine's better if it breathes a little."

He saw them smile knowingly at each other. He took the wine bottle and corkscrew to a dark counter and managed to dump his vial of powdered sleeping pills into the wine.

"I love wine, but don't drink much of it these days," he said. "It seems to burn me." He held up his glass. "I would take another Canadian and water."

Ed Bradford fixed him a fresh one. It was dark brown with whiskey, and Cannert fought to control his stomach.

They ate companionably. The Bradfords copiously toasted their wine with his Canadian.

"No business at all tonight?" Cannert asked.

"Sometimes, on Sundays, I shut it off. All you get on Sundays are problems. Besides, it's a day of rest."

The meal was Cannert's fish. Emma had baked them in wine and doused them with lemon. They were good. On the side there was a crisp, green salad and tiny potatoes.

"New potatoes," Emma boasted. "And the salad's all fresh. No canned stuff. Me and Ed like to eat good."

Cannert nodded approval. "You people know how to live."

She brought him coffee—hot, black, and strong. Cannert sipped it and then idly added cream and sugar while they watched. The coffee was still salty, but he drank it.

"Tastes so strong it's almost bitter," he said appreciatively.

They nodded. Cannert could sense them waiting.

In a short while, he could see they were growing sleepy. It was time.

"I had a wife once," he said conversationally.

"A wife?" Ed asked.

"Yes. She came down to Florida to find a place for us when I first took sick. Maybe she might have stopped here? She'd have been traveling alone under the name of Martha Cannert. Big woman, grey hair."

"She might have stayed here. I don't remember her." Bradford stirred uneasily. He tried to rise and had problems. "What's wrong with me?" he asked.

The two watched each other, ignoring Cannert.

"I put something in the wine," Cannert explained.

Ed Bradford made it ponderously to his feet. He staggered to the drawer which held the gun. He dug it out and aimed it at Cannert. He clicked it twice.

"I knocked the firing pin off your gun."

The motel man reversed the gun and came toward him, but Cannert easily eluded him.

"It's only a sleeping powder," he told the two of them soothingly. "I need to know about my Martha. I think she stopped here. Maybe you killed her? That's what you had in mind for me, isn't it?"

"Still do," Ed Bradford muttered. "We'll wake up. You won't."

Cannert bent over, acting out inner pain. "Something hurts bad."

"It's the strychnine," Emma said triumphantly. "I put a lot in your coffee. You haven't got long."

"And Martha?" he pleaded.

"Maybe we got her, too. We do someone now and then. I think there was someone like that." She gave him a sleepy, apologetic look. "We have to do this to survive, you know. We can't fail again. We can't go back where it's cold. We've got to make it here, and times have gotten bad. So, now and then, we do someone, someone alone. Someone like you. We bury them at sea or under the sand. We sell the car or call the junk man for it. The Mister," she nodded at her hus-

band, "knows how."

"My Martha was a tall woman. She wore little, half glasses and bright clothes. She drove a '76 Plymouth with Illinois plates." He thought for a moment. "It would have been about nine months ago."

Emma started to snore. Cannert moved from her to Ed and shook him. His eyes opened.

"Did you kill her?" he asked.

"We'll wake up," Bradford repeated. "You won't."

Cannert alternately searched the office and tried to shake one or the other of the Bradfords awake. The only results he achieved from the Bradfords were moans and mumbles and threshings about.

He found nothing in the office to convince him Martha had been a motel guest at Mom's. He did find guest cards in a file in the back of a drawer under the desk. He went through them. The cards had gaps in their consecutive numbers, and he theorized they'd destroyed the cards of those they'd killed. Going back a year, he counted eight missing numbers including his own. He scattered the remaining cards about the rooms.

He waited until the moon was down outside, waited until he'd not heard a passing car along the road that fronted the motel for a long time. Then he loaded his car and drove it to the darkened front of the office, after washing and toweling every place he might have touched in his own room.

He went back inside the office area. Ed Bradford now snored loudly, but Emma lay unmoving, her breathing shallow. He tried to awaken them, but without success.

Cannert doused the office and the rooms back of it with the contents of the emergency can of gas he'd purchased earlier.

From outside the front door he tossed a match. He dodged away from the sudden surge of flame and heat.

He drove to the highway. Behind him, from there, he could see flames already breaking out from under the eaves on the pool side of the office area.

He drove north and pulled off the road again about a mile

away at a higher place. By the time he heard distant fire engines, the flames were crackling against the sky.

He started his car again and drove sedately on.

Someplace, down another road, there'd be another motel, another place Martha might have stayed. He decided to drive east. He thought about new methods for the next place. This time there'd be no angry rifle shots because someone had looked through his bag, then done nothing else. This time there'd be no arson. An idea about dynamite came and made him smile. He knew about dynamite.

A man in his condition needed to stay occupied. ST

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TRAPDOOR TREASURES

In early 1945, while the U.S. Army was rapidly advancing toward Berlin, Private James T. Trapani of the 82nd Airborne Division stumbled upon one of the most incredible finds of World War II.

While on infantry detail near the village of Bichl, south of Munich, Trapani discovered a camouflaged trapdoor in an open field. Cautiously opening the trapdoor and descending a short flight of steps, he beheld a sight that "I shall never forget as long as I live.

"There before me were scores of paintings by the masters, barrels upon barrels of rare stones, jewelry of all descriptions, boxes without number of Italian lire, German marks, English pounds, American dollars, French francs, and currency from other countries."

It was subsequently learned by Army counterintelligence officers that this incredible cache had been buried in a salt mine by the German High Command. Realizing that World War II was lost, the Nazis planned to use this buried treasure to wage their next war.

According to reliable information, this storehouse of wealth, beyond human imagination, was requisitioned by the military commanders of the Allied nations and turned over to the proper civilian authorities. □

J. F. PEIRCE

"Frank" Peirce is a man of multiple talents and keen wit, with many published stories and puzzles to his credit. He has just recently retired from his teaching position as professor of English at Texas A&M University.

In THE 39-CENT THEFT, Peirce is at his audacious, humorous best. Imagine: a brilliant, but oversized, detective who spends most of his waking hours (when he isn't tending his poisonous mushrooms) sitting in his sauna, nude, behind a red plastic desk—a detective who insists that all clients, of whatever gender, join him there in similar attire . . . .

THE 39-CENT THEFT

My name is R.C. Badman. The *R.C.* doesn't stand for anything. My mother was drinking an R.C. Cola when she went into labor.

I work for Caesar Foxx. *The* Caesar Foxx. The famous detective. The one who won't leave his sauna except to go to the cellar to look at his collection of mushrooms—most of them poisonous. The one who's really big on fast foods. The one who uses me as a go-fer to go for pizzas at any hour of the day or night. That's the one.

We were in the sauna. Foxx, looking like an albino Buddha, had gotten himself into the lotus position. How, I'll never know. The sauna was a preview of Hell. Perspiration had formed a puddle in his navel.

A third man was sitting on the redwood bench next to me. C.B. Ramming. *The* C.B. Ramming. The unctuous, multimillionaire oil baron. He was wearing only cowboy boots and a cowboy hat and sweating money.

Everything about him was pig-like. I was surprised he didn't have a tail.

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"Somebody's been stealin' from me," he said.

"Stealing you blind, eh?" Foxx said.

You can tell he's not related to Redd Foxx.

"Not hardly!" C.B. said. "I've got my eyes open. That's how I know someone's nicked me for thirty-nine cents."

I wasn't sure I'd heard him correctly.

Foxx was evidently unsure, also. "You do know," he said, "that I charge one thousand dollars a day and expenses, and that includes what I eat and drink, which is not inconsiderable?"

C.B. nodded. "I collect coins," he said. "The thirty-nine cents were from my collection. The coins were my favorites and all extremely rare. They're worth over two hundred thousand dollars."

I whistled in a minor key.

Foxx licked his lips as if in anticipation of a giant-sized, thick-crusted pizza with all the trimmings.

"Whom do you suspect?" he asked.

"My secretary, my son by my second wife, my third wife, my mistress, and my lawyer. They're the only ones who have access to my home office where the coins are kept."

He paused, then continued. "Since I know you never leave your sauna except to go to the cellar to tend to your mushrooms, I've brought them all here, so you can question them. They're all stark nekkid, since they've assured me they've nothin' to hide."

He chuckled and gave me a shot in the ribs with his left elbow.

"Won't the confrontation be embarrassing, especially to your wife and mistress?" I asked.

"No. They know about one another. When you're as rich as I am, you can do anythin' you damned well please. Everyone wants somethin' from you, and they'll do jist about anythin' you ask to try to git it."

Foxx unfolded himself from the lotus position (no easy task) and took the seat behind his red plastic desk. That was his signal to me.

I went to the door and ushered in C.B.'s suspects, seating

them on the redwood benches so that I could keep one eye on the man and the boy and two eyes on the women.

None of the women seemed embarrassed. They were obviously comparing themselves with one another. And there was a lot to compare. All cherce!

I was fascinated by the rivulets of perspiration cascading over their curves.

The lawyer wore thick-lensed glasses that promptly fogged over, causing him to look like Daddy Warbucks.

I felt sorry for him.

C.B.'s son was three years old at most. C.B. couldn't deny the kid was his. He looked as porcine as his father.

The kid was into everything. The first thing he did was to get a handful of paperclips from Foxx's desk and pop them into his mouth like so many peanuts.

No one paid him any attention.

"Charlene," C.B. said, pointing to the statuesque blonde, "is David's mother. She was my secretary at the time I divorced my first wife to marry her. Brenda's my third wife." He gestured toward a statuesque brunette. "She was my secretary while I was married to Charlene.

"After Charlene had David . . ." He paused and looked around for the kid, who was sticking a pencil up his snout-like nose. ". . . I divorced her, married Brenda, and hired Charlene as my secretary."

"Why?" Foxx asked.

I was glad he'd asked. I was dying to know.

C.B. looked at Charlene appreciatively.

So did I.

"Well, for one thing," he said, "she's a damned fine secretary."

The other reasons were obvious.

"And your mistress?" Foxx asked, looking at the statuesque redhead, the amplest and most appetizing of the three.

"Amanda's Elliot's wife."

"Who is Elliot?"

C.B. gestured toward the lawyer.

Foxx took a can of Rex Stout ("The stout of kings!") from the built-in refrigerator in his desk and pulled off the tab.

After putting the tab in the ashtray on his desk, he swallowed the contents of the can without pausing to breathe.

Before anyone could stop him, the kid snatched up the metal tab and swallowed it, without suffering any apparent ill effect.

Foxx and I were the only ones who seemed upset by it.

Foxx was upset because he was saving the tabs to make a chain.

I was upset because I could envision a sticky lawsuit if the kid were to choke.

I took a short snort from the flask I keep with my gun under my towel.

"Now," Foxx said, "let me ask a few questions."

He turned to the redhead, Amanda, and I applauded his choice.

"Have you ever seen the coins that were stolen?" Foxx asked.

"C.B. showed them to me the first time we met."

Foxx turned to the multimillionaire. "You showed her your coin collection the first time you met? Was that smart?" he asked.

"You better believe it! That's part of my gambit. I show a woman my collection, tell her how much it's worth, then ask her if she'd like to step into the bedroom next to my office and change into somethin' more comfortable, like her skin."

He chuckled and gave me an elbow in the ribs. "Get it? Coin collection—change! It works every time."

The women nodded.

"Every time!" he repeated. "Any of them could have gone into my walk-in safe and taken the coins. The safe's always open durin' the day. I keep office supplies and my likker in it—as Elliot damn well knows. I've caught him nippin' my twenty-year-old scotch numerous times. Straight from the bottle!" C.B. glared at the lawyer.

Though the lawyer couldn't see him, he must have felt

C.B.'s beady eyes upon him, for he coughed in embarrassment.

"Doesn't it bother you to share your wife with C.B.?" Foxx asked.

"Yes and no," the lawyer answered. "Look at her!"

I did as directed.

"Now look at me!"

I passed on that and kept my eyes on his wife.

"I can't afford Amanda, nor can I satisfy her. Letting her become C.B.'s mistress seemed the best solution."

"Besides, he didn't have a choice," the redhead said.

Foxx turned to Brenda. "Doesn't it bother you that your husband has a mistress?" he asked.

"No, it keeps him from bothering me, *constantly*. Besides, he only marries his secretaries."

Charlene smiled knowingly.

"My first wife was my secretary, also," C.B. said. "I like secretaries because they take dictation. Get it?"

Though I tried to avoid it, I got it, in the ribs.

The kid stuck a pencil in one ear and seemingly pulled it out the other.

I wasn't surprised.

I looked at my waterproof wristwatch. It was time for Foxx to make his daily trek down to the cellar to make love to his mushrooms. I wondered how long he'd let this farce go on. The solution to the coins' disappearance was obvious, even to me.

As if in answer to my unspoken question, Foxx said, "Mr. Ramming, the solution to your problem is obvious, probably even to R.C. Believe me, everything will come out all right in the end."

Maybe Foxx was related to Redd after all.

I chuckled and gave C.B. a shot in the ribs.

"Neither Brenda nor Charlene took the coins," Foxx said, addressing the multimillionaire. "They no doubt think they'd have more to lose by stealing from you than they'd have to gain.

"Brenda thinks her position is secure, since you marry

only your secretaries and you've already been married to Charlene."

Brenda smiled, and C.B. nodded.

"Now that Charlene's once again your secretary, she thinks she can hook you again."

Charlene smiled as Brenda's smile faded.

"Amanda, since she has the most to offer, feels she can persuade you to divorce Brenda and marry her. She wouldn't steal thirty-nine cents when she could steal so much more."

I contemplated Amanda's navel while I waited for Foxx to deliver his punch line.

Foxx took another stout from his fridge and downed it.

David stole the tab, put it in his mouth, and swallowed it.

Foxx stared at him sternly. "Give them to me, son!" he said.

To my surprise, the boy took the tab out of his mouth, then pulled the other tab and the paperclips out of his pockets and placed them on the desk.

"The lad wants attention, which you're not giving him," Foxx said. "That's why he pretends to swallow things. At the moment, he's only pretending, but . . . ."

"You're sayin' David took the coins to git attention?" C.B. demanded.

"No, though he might have if he'd known how much they mean to you. No, it would be too much of a coincidence for the lad to have taken all coins that are rare and that you prize. Only someone who knows the coins' worth and what they mean to you could have done it."

C.B. turned toward the lawyer.

Foxx nodded. "No doubt he bought them for you, knows their worth."

The lawyer's body sagged. His face crumbled.

"But why? I pay him well enough."

"Well enough to share his wife? No, he took the coins the better to afford her and to revenge himself on you. Why else would he have led you to believe he was taking your liquor when it angered you? Like David, he's a magician. He mis-

directed your attention by pretending to steal your liquor."

I was glad I hadn't voiced *my* solution. Picking up one of the metal tabs, I nibbled it thoughtfully. ST

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THE ZERO FACTOR

One of strangest mysteries in the United States concerns the fate of some U.S. presidents. Since the election of 1840, no successful candidate for president elected in a zero-ending year has left the White House alive.

It began with William Henry Harrison, elected chief executive in 1840, who caught a cold and died of pneumonia just one month after his inauguration. Abraham Lincoln, first elected in 1860—James A. Garfield, elected in 1880—William McKinley, reelected in 1900, were all assassinated. Warren G. Harding, elected in 1920, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, elected for the third time in 1940, both died in office.

Senator John F. Kennedy, a year and a half before winning the presidential election in 1960, commented on this strange mystery:

> . . . "As to 'what effect, if any, this will have on your presidential aspirations,' I feel that the future will have to necessarily answer this for itself—both as to my aspirations and my fate should I have the privilege of occupying the White House."

President Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, the seventh consecutive president to become a victim of the "Zero Factor."

It is chilling to note that the only non-zero-ending president to die in office was Zachary Taylor, who was elected in 1848—but died in 1850! Again, that unlucky zero appeared. Will this jinx end with the election of 1980? President Ronald Reagan was the target of an assassination attempt. Fortunately, the president recovered from his wounds and was able to resume his executive duties. Will history repeat itself? Only time will tell.

Harry Squires

H. R. F. KEATING

After a successful career as a British journalist with several newspapers, "Harry" Keating quickly established himself as a full-fledged mystery novelist in the 1960s. Most of his crime novels are set in India—replete with local color, customs, and speech patterns—and feature his famous Inspector Ganesh Ghote (pronounced Go-tay) of the Bombay CID. Acclaimed critics have referred to the fictional Ghote as "one of the great characters of the contemporary mystery novel."

The renowned Bombay inspector rarely appears in shorter works, so it is with a great deal of pride we present Ghote in a short story, THE ALL-BAD HAT, written especially for the first issue of the new SAINT Magazine. "Please to enjoy."

THE ALL-BAD HAT

Inspector Ghote of the Bombay C.I.D. was not a frequenter of record shops. But on this occasion he was on an important errand. It was soon to be his son Ved's birthday, and Ghote's wife, Protima, had declared that the one thing the boy really wanted as a present was a record of the title song from the new hit movie *Sant aur Badmash,* the one in which two brothers are separated soon after their birth and one becomes a holyman, a saint, a *sant,* and the other becomes a deepest-dyed villain, a *badmash.* And in the last reel they are reconciled.

But Ghote was not finding it easy to make his purchase. From loudspeakers in all four corners of the smart new shop—he had been told it was the best in Bombay—music was pounding out at maximum volume. His attempts to make anyone behind the counter hear had so far come to nothing.

At last he could stand the frustration no longer. He leant

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across the glossy counter, seized a young man behind it by the sides of his silk *kurta*, and drew him close.

"Please to stop all this noise," he demanded.

"Noise?" said the young man, or rather *shouted* the young man. "What noise is it?"

"That music. That damn music. Kindly get owner here to turn down volume."

"I am owner," the young man answered. "Sole proprietor, Loafer's Delight Disc Mart."

"Then you must turn down the volume," Ghote shouted. "Now."

"Cool it, man," the young proprietor shouted back. "Be cooling it. That volume's good."

"It is bad. Bad, I tell you. I am thinking it may be offence against the law."

"The law? You are making me laugh, man."

Ghote felt a jet of rage fountain up inside him.

"I am an inspector of police," he shouted.

"That is swinging, man," the proprietor riposted. "And I am the son of the Minister for Home."

"Please to behave," Ghote answered, sharply dismissing such impudence.

But whether the young man would have obeyed this injunction or not was never to be put to the test. Down near the entrance of the long, tunnel-like shop, with its smart new racks of records and tapes and its dazzling posters decorating every wall, someone else was not behaving well.

In fact, two tough-looking men, roughly dressed in contrast to the shop's smart clientele, were behaving extremely badly.

One of the record racks had already been deliberately knocked over. As the shop's young proprietor reduced the volume of his massive loudspeakers almost to nothing, more as a response to the trouble near the entrance than to Ghote's demand, Ghote was able to hear what one of the newcomers was calling out to the other.

"Hey, Chandra bhai, these stands, see how easy they tip over."

"Yes, yes," the other man, a turbaned Sikh, called back. "And these posters. So nice. But, look, already they are torn."

They were not as he spoke. But two instants later they were torn indeed, ripped right off the walls by the man himself.

"Stop," screamed the young proprietor. "Stop. Those are imported. Two hundred rupees each."

Rip. Rip. Rip. Another six hundred rupees went cascading to the floor.

"All right," Ghote said. "I will deal with those two."

He began making his way purposefully down the length of the narrow shop. But the place was too crowded for him to be able to get anywhere near the two troublemakers before, with cheerful shouts of "Sorry, Mr. Loafer" and "Good-bye, Mr. Loafer Delight," they had reached the entrance and disappeared among the packed pavements of Mahatma Gandhi Road.

However, Ghote had had plenty of time to study the faces of the two goondas and had hurried back to C.I.D. Headquarters and there gone through the fat, tattered books of criminals in the Records section. It had not taken him long to find the two. The Sikh was one Iqbal Singh and the other was a certain Chandra Chagoo.

"I do not think I would have too much of difficulty to nab the pair of them, sir," Ghote said to Assistant Commissioner of Police Samant a quarter of an hour later.

"You are not even to try, Inspector."

Ghote blinked.

"Not to try, A.C.P. sahib? But already I am knowing the favoured haunts of those two. I can have them behind the bars in no time at all."

"You are not to waste your time."

Ghote stared at the A.C.P. across his wide, semicircular desk with its clutter of telephones, pen sets, and teacups. He really could not believe he had heard what he had.

"But, sir," he pleaded, "if you had seen those two goondas, the way they set about breaking up that place, sir. It was a matter of deliberate destruction at a Number One

level."

"No doubt, no doubt, Inspector. And you know why they were doing all that?"

"Protection racket, sir. The young fellow who owns the place was telling me afterwards. He had been asked to pay and said he would rely upon the police to protect him. It is a very black mark for us, sir."

"And you know why a pair of goondas like that can get away with doing such things, Inspector?"

"No, sir," Ghote had to answer after thinking hard.

"It is because those two goondas that you were taking such trouble to impress on your memory, Inspector, are no more than small fries only."

"Small fries, sir?"

"Exactly, Inspector. You can nab them if you want, but when they come up before the Magistrate, what would we find?"

Ghote decided to leave the Assistant Commissioner to answer his own question.

"We would find that they are having alibis, Inspector. First-class alibis. Two, three, four seemingly respectable fellows willing to swear that at the time in question our two friends were not in Bombay even. And a damn fine advocate to back up the tale."

"But . . . but, A.C.P. sahib, alibis and advocates are costing very much of money. And those two did not look as if they are have more than two paisa to rub together."

"Quite right, Inspector."

"But then . . . ."

"But the fellow they are working for has got all the paisa you could wish for."

"And that is who, A.C.P.?"

"It is Daddyji."

"Daddyji, sir?"

"Yes, Inspector. Other names he has and has. But Daddyji he is known as always. If you had worked on protection racket cases before, you would have known."

"Yes, sir. He is running many many such rackets then?"

"Not so many, Inspector."

"But, sir, if he is not running many many, then how is he so wealthy that he can afford such alibis and advocates?"

"It is because of the kind of places he is specialising in protecting, Inspector. He likes only the best. Anything that is particularly fine. Best class places only."

"I see, sir. Yes, that is bad."

"He *is* bad, Inspector. Daddyji *is* bad. He is nothing less than an all-bad hat."

Until this moment, Ghote had been following the A.C.P.'s explanation with all dutifulness. But these last words stuck in his craw. An all-bad hat? All bad? He could not find it in himself to believe it. And foolishly he ventured to express that doubt.

"But, sir, no man is altogether . . . ."

"What is this, Inspector? You, a police officer. You have seen plenty of miscreants, I hope. Am I going to hear you tell me there is no such thing as an all-bad man?"

"But . . . ."

Ghote thought better of it.

"No, sir."

"Hmm. Well, I grant that most criminals are not all-bad. They are lacking in the guts to be. But that is not meaning that there are not all-bad men, and of them all, Inspector, the man by the name of Daddyji is the worst. The worst."

"But, sir . . . ."

"No. Let me tell a thing or two about Daddyji, Inspector. Have you got a father?"

"Sir, everybody is having a father. They may not still be . . . ."

"Good. Well, now, perhaps you may not have had good relations with your father. But nevertheless, you were treating him always with a certain respect, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Daddyji has a father, Inspector. He used to run the gang that Daddyji now has. A pretty tough chap, also. But then came the day when Daddyji thought it was time that he took over. Do you know where that father is now,

Inspector?"

"No, sir."

"Take a walk down to Flora Fountain, Inspector. There you would see a crippled man, propped up against the wall, selling little clay figures that he is making."

"Yes, sir. I am knowing him. Very very popular with tourists, the figures he is making. Most lively objects."

"And damn close to falling under Indian Penal Code, Section 292."

"Obscene books and objects, sir. Yes, sir, I think you are right."

"But it is not those that I am concerned with, Inspector. It is his legs."

"His legs, sir?"

"I suppose you are too busy always looking at those figures. But that man's legs are smashed to pieces, Inspector. And it was his own son who was doing that."

"I see, sir. Yes, a very bad hat."

"No, Inspector. An all-bad hat. An all-bad hat. And much too clever to be nabbed by one inspector only. So, leave him . . . ."

He broke off as one of the phones on his wide desk shrilled out. He picked up the receiver.

"Samant. What is it? Oh. Oh, yes, sir. Yes, Minister sahib. Yes? Yes, your son, Minister sahib. Yes, I see, sir. Yes, yes. Yes, at once. At once, Minister sahib."

Slowly A.C.P. Samant put down the receiver. He gave Ghote, standing neatly to attention on the far side of his desk, a slow, assessing look.

"So, Inspector, as I was telling, it is not going to be at all easy to pull in Daddyji. But we are going to do it. You are going to do it. He has a place down in Colaba. Go over there *ek dum* and get out of him something. Something to have him fairly and squarely on a first-class foolproof charge."

So, scarcely half an hour later, Ghote was standing face to face with the man A.C.P. Samant had pronounced to be all-bad.

Certainly, he thought—looking at the burly frame, the almost bald bullet head with the thick knife scar running above the left eyebrow, and the expression of sullen coldness in the deep-set eyes—the fellow has all the appearance of somebody who is bad. Very bad even. But all-bad?

In spite of everything the A.C.P. had said, Ghote kept his reservations.

"Well," he said, "so you are the famous Daddyji I have heard and read a lot about. But you are not so big as I was expecting. You are not much taller than myself."

"But twice as hard," said Daddyji, his voice grinding out.

"Perhaps. But let me tell you something. However hard or not hard I am, the C.I.D. itself is harder than you, Daddyji. Than you or anyone—than any man with a man's weaknesses."

"But I am here. And this is not Thana Gaol."

"No, it is not. But the day for Thana Gaol is coming."

"All kinds of days are coming. The day when elephants are flying, the day when the sea is drying up. But still I am able to do what I want."

"But perhaps that time is going to end sooner than you think. I have a feeling that now you have gone too far."

"I go where I like. Where do you think is too far, my little inspector?"

"I think," Ghote said slowly, "the Loafer's Delight Disc Mart was too far. The owner is the son of the Minister for Home."

But his threat, if threat it was, received only a roar of uninhibited laughter from the gang boss.

"Oh," he said, wiping his eyes, "that I was not knowing."

"Not when you were ordering his shop to be pulled to pieces?" Ghote slipped in.

But his ruse was by no means clever enough.

"I order, Inspectorji?" Daddyji answered blandly. "But why should you be thinking that?"

"Because that is your modus operandi," Ghote replied. "That is the pattern you are always working to, Daddyji. We know very much about you already."

"You know nothing."

"Oh, perhaps not enough to get a conviction today. But no man is perfect, and one day you would make mistake."

"Oh, yes, mistake and mistake I will make. But it will be no matter."

"No matter?"

Daddyji shrugged.

"If I am making mistake," he said, "it would maybe cost me plenty plenty. But plenty plenty I have. So good-bye to catching Daddyji, Inspector."

"Nevertheless," Ghote said, "I require you to answer certain questions."

"Answers cost nothing."

"If they are not true, they will cost you your freedom."

But Daddyji only smiled.

"They will cost me only the price of making them true after, my little inspector," he said. "And lies are cheap enough."

"We shall see. Now, where were you at 3:15 pip emma today?"

"That is easy. I was here. I am always careful to be with friends at such times, and I was talking with a police constable I am knowing."

"At such times?" Ghote leapt in. "Why were you saying 'at such times'?"

Daddyji smiled again.

"At such times? At afternoon times only, Inspector. It is at such times that a man feels sad, and then it is good to talk. Especially with a police constable."

"Very well. Then tell me, when did you last see two men by the names of Iqbal Singh and Chandra Chagoo?"

"Inspector, will you say those names again?"

"You are very well knowing them."

"Inspector, I have never heard of any such persons. Who are they, please?"

"They are the men you instructed to break up the Loafer's Delight Disc Mart."

Daddyji looked Ghote straight in the eye.

"And you would never be able to prove that, Inspector," he said. "You would never be able to prove that we have ever even met."

So Ghote hardly had anything very successful to report. And A.C.P. Samant was not very pleased.

"And I suppose now," he snapped, "you are proposing to sit upon your bottom and say 'no can do' "?

"No, sir," Ghote answered firmly.

"No, sir. No, sir. Then what are you proposing to do, man?"

"Sir, from my examination of the material in Records I have come to the conclusion there is one good line still to take."

"Records. Records. You are all alike. If it is hiding in Records with a good fan blowing down on you in the heat, you are willing to work and to work. But if it is getting out into the hot streets, you are thinking differently."

"But, sir, I am about to go out into the hot . . . into the streets, sir. To interview the owner of the only place so far to have defied Daddyji's goondas, sir. An establishment by the name of the Galerie Sodawaterwala."

"Galerie? Galerie? What sort of a place is that?"

"It is an art gallery, A.C.P. sahib, and also a shop for the sale of curios and other objects."

"Thank you for telling me, Inspector. And I suppose next you are going to inform me that Sodawaterwala is an old Parsi name. But give me credit for knowing a little bit about some things, Inspector."

"Yes, sir. No, sir. Sorry, sir."

"Well, what for are you standing there, man? Get out there to this Sodawaterwala Gallery and talk to the man."

Mr. Sodawaterwala seemed well named. He was a meek and mild-looking individual, evidently with all the artistic leanings of the ancient Parsi community fully developed. But he had refused to pay Daddyji's men any protection money. Even after the police guard he had been given, when he had

reported the approach first, had eventually been withdrawn.

"And nothing has happened since those men were withdrawn?" Ghote asked him, with surprise.

"Ah, no, Inspector. But, you see, I took certain steps."

"Steps?"

Mr. Sodawaterwala heaved a neat little sigh.

"Inspector," he said, "I must confess. I hired goondas of my own."

"Criminal types? But, Mr. Sodawaterwala . . . ."

"Yes, yes. But what was I to do? The very day the police guard was withdrawn, I spotted on the far pavement there the very men who had earlier demanded money. But I am glad to say, Inspector, that both the fellows I hired proved to be altogether charming chaps."

"I am glad to hear."

"Yes, yes. Goondas they may have been, but thoroughly willing and dependable fellows, both."

"They may have *been*, Mr. Sodawaterwala? Are they then with you no more?"

"No, no. They are here always by day. But by night, I regret to say, I have been unable to find any others as dependable."

"But have you then left the premises unguarded at night?"

Mr. Sodawaterwala suddenly smiled with tremendous impishness.

"No, no, no, indeed," he said. "Come this way, Inspector, and I will show you something."

He led Ghote to an upstairs office over the big gallery showroom, throwing open its door with a flourish. And there, sitting on two stools, were what Ghote took to be at first sight a pair of the most villainous looking goondas he had ever met.

But then he stood peering in at the dimly lit room and looked again.

"They are not real?" he asked."They are dummies only?"

Mr. Sodawaterwala giggled in glee.

"Exactly so, Inspector. Exactly so. A ruse I borrowed from my extensive reading of the crime stories of the West. The

Saint, Sherlock Holmes, and so forth. These are just such models as deceived the fierce Colonel Moran when Holmes returned from the dead."

"You were making yourself?" Ghote asked, looking more closely at the extremely lifelike heads.

"No, no, my dear sir. I have no talent in that direction. Yet I am inclined to bet that you will never guess who did indeed make these altogether excellent figures."

"One of the artists whose work you are selling?"

"No, no. Not at all, not at all."

"Then I am unable to guess."

"They were made, my dear sir, by none other than my sweeper boy."

"A sweeper. But . . . ."

"Yes, yes. But how could a sweeper, a boy of the lowest class, have such a talent? You are right to ask. But, Inspector, let it be a lesson to us. Never underestimate the abilities and complexity of any human being whatsoever."

"He made them by himself, without any assistance?" Ghote asked, looking again at the uncannily lifelike models, still only half able to believe that someone young and untutored could possess such ability.

"Something like a miracle, is it not?" the dapper little Parsi gallery owner said. "And, more than this, the boy—he is about sixteen years of age only—came to me like a miracle."

"How was that?" Ghote asked.

"Well, one morning a few weeks ago my old sweeper, who had been with me for years, announced suddenly that he was leaving. I offered him an increment. I offered him a better place to sleep. He had the use of this cupboard here under the stair. Look."

Mr. Sodawaterwala led Ghote to a small door under the stairs and opened it with a flourish.

"You will meet my miracle . . . ." he began.

Then his voice came to an abrupt halt.

"But . . . but this is extraordinary," he said.

"What is it?" Ghote asked, alerted by the note of bewilder-

ment in the Parsi's tone.

"The boy, Piloo. He has gone. Look. All his few possessions, they are here no more. And his pictures. His pictures have gone."

"What pictures are these?" Ghote asked.

"I was telling you, Inspector. Piloo came to me asking for a job just the very day that my old sweeper left so unaccountably. But quite soon I discovered that Piloo was a remarkable artist. He began to play with some scraps of modelling clay that were lying about, and he made these really excellent small pictures. Scenes of everyday life, modelled in clay. I was going to put them on display even."

"He knew this?"

"Yes, yes. Only three days ago I told him. And now he has gone. Vanished. And I really believe he would have become the Indian Hogarth."

Ghote stood in silent tribute for a moment to this odd event in the gallery owner's life. But he could not waste more time.

"Mr. Sodawaterwala," he said, "when I saw those dummies of your goonda guards, an idea came into my head. Can I ask you tonight not to put them in their usual place?"

Mr. Sodawaterwala visibly paled.

"But, Inspector," he said, "in that case I very much fear I shall be visited by those fellows who threatened me. They will break up the gallery, perhaps even attack me, myself."

"That they should come into the gallery is my object," Ghote answered. "But do not take away the dummies till a late hour. Say, after midnight. Before then I will come and conceal myself on the premises."

"And catch the fellows red-handed?" Mr. Sodawaterwala brightened.

"More than that I am hoping," Ghote said. "I hope to catch them and to get them to admit who sent them."

"You think you can do that, Inspector?"

"I think I must do it, Mr. Sodawaterwala."

Ghote's mind was still filled with that determination as,

just after eleven that night, he cautiously approached the darkened Galerie Sodawaterwala from the rear, the key to its back door, which Mr. Sodawaterwala had given him, in his hand.

But he found the little door in the narrow dark lane already unlocked. Worse, forced open.

With pounding heart, he pushed into the echoing empty premises, flashing his pocket torch here and there. All seemed to be well. Nowhere was there any sign of the damage Daddyji's men were likely to have inflicted.

But then, from somewhere up above, he thought he detected a sound. A muffled groan.

He swung the flashlight beam round, located the stairs, pounded up them. Pausing for a moment at the top, he listened. And, yes, distinctly, another groan.

He ran forward.

Mr. Sodawaterwala was lying on the floor in the middle of his little upstairs office. His face was black and bloodied. One of his legs was twisted under him at an angle that it should never have been. Both his hands were a mess of open wounds.

Ghote knelt beside him.

"Mr. Sodawaterwala," he said, "I am here. I will fetch help. Do not try to move. Where is your telephone?"

"In gallery," the battered Parsi managed. "Down . . . ."

"Yes, yes. Downstairs. I am going. Lie back. Help will be here in a few minutes only."

And, indeed, an ambulance arrived in answer to Ghote's urgent call in a commendably short time. But the interval had been long enough for Mr. Sodawaterwala to groan out to Ghote the details of what had happened.

"Daddyji" was the first word that he managed to mutter.

"Daddyji?" Ghote asked. "Did he come himself? Was it him who did this to you?"

"He took pleasure . . . in telling . . . telling me."

Ghote felt a renewed sense of angry determination.

"Then we shall get him," he said. "I am promising you that, Mr. Sodawaterwala. But how was it that he knew this

was a time to come? Were those dummies still in place?"

"Yes. Yes. Still there. As instructed. But Piloo. Piloo had gone."

"Piloo? Your sweeper boy who disappeared this afternoon? What had he to do with this?"

"Brother."

"Brother? I do not understand."

"Piloo Daddyji's young brother. Daddyji told me. Told me made my old sweeper leave, put the boy in instead. Spy."

Ghote, kneeling beside the broken body of Parsi, whom he had not liked to move, thought for a little.

"But did you not tell it was some weeks since the boy came?" he asked at last. "He had time to make the dummies, and for you to discover he was the Indian Garth-ho."

"Hogarth. Hogarth. Very famous British artist. Scenes of low life."

"I am sorry. Hogarth. Yes, Hogarth. But why, if he was sent as a spy, did he not tell Daddyji long ago that you were not really guarded?"

"Because I had told him what a talent he had. He refused for a time to tell his brother."

"Daddyji told you this?"

"Boasted. Said he was giving me extra because. . .because of that."

"Yes, that is very like the man," Ghote said grimly. "But now we would nab him. With your assistance we would do it."

"No," groaned the battered man on the floor beside him.

"But. . .but. . . . No, lie back, Mr. Sodawaterwala."

"Inspector, I will not give evidence against that man."

"But, Mr. Sodawaterwala, this is the one good chance we have. A man of your reputation, a stainless witness against that man."

"Inspector. Not what I thought I was. Not a fighter for good through and through. Insp . . . . He told me what he would do to me next time."

So it was with feelings of deep pessimism that Ghote report-

ed next day to A.C.P. Samant.

"Sir, Mr. Sodawaterwala is recovering well in J.J. Hospital. But he is adamant, sir. He will not give evidence."

The A.C.P. grunted noncommittally.

"And you say this boy, this Piloo, is Daddyji's younger brother?"

"Yes, sir. But if you are thinking that here is a way into that man's heart, I do not ...."

"Heart? Heart? I tell you, Inspector, that sort of talk does not apply in the case of Daddyji. He is an all-bad hat. Understand that."

"Yes, sir."

"But the boy took away from the gallery these paintings or pictures or whatever?"

"Pictures in clay, sir. Mr. Sodawaterwala believes they will make him the Indian Garth ... the Indian Hogarth, sir."

"I dare say. I dare say. But the point is that the clay was undoubtedly the property of Mr. Sodawaterwala. So the boy stole it. And we are going to put him behind the bars for that."

Ghote felt puzzled.

"But, sir, he was not anything to do with the raid on the Minister's son's record shop, sir."

"But is the Minister to know that, Ghote? Is he? Is he? No, no, we tell Minister sahib that the boy was one of the two brothers and that it has been convenient to bring a charge against one only, and we assure him that the culprit will catch a damn long term of Rigorous Imprisonment. That will get the Minister off our back. And that, after all, is the object of the exercise."

"But, sir," Ghote said, flooded with sudden dismay. "Sir, the boy is the Indian Hogarth. If he is sent to prison, India will lose her Hogarth."

A.C.P. Samant brought his fist crashing down onto his desk till every brass paperweight there jumped in the air.

"Inspector," he stormed, "unless you get down to Colaba and arrest that boy now, India will lose her Inspector Ghote."

Less than an hour later, Ghote was once again facing the formidable figure of Daddyji. A smiling, contemptuous Daddyji.

"I had a feeling that I would be seeing you soon, my little inspector."

"I expect so," Ghote returned levelly. "But I have not come to hear where you were at 11 pip emma last night."

That did get home to the iron-tough crook.

"Not? Not? But you must want to know. I was far away. Out at Juhu Beach. With my friends Mahesh Khandwalla, Sudhakar Dalvi, Mohamed Hai, Sudhir . . . ."

"Stop. However many names you are giving, I know you were at the Galerie Sodawaterwala committing grievous bodily harm."

Daddyji brightened at this. Here was a game where he knew the score.

"And you have witnesses?" he asked. "As many as I have?"

"I have one witness. The best. I have the man you beat up."

"And he will give evidence, is it?"

"Why would he not?"

Daddyji shrugged. Elaborately.

"How should I be knowing, my little inspector, why this witness of yours will not tell the lies you are wanting? Perhaps it is that he is afraid."

"Afraid of worse treatment from you," Ghote stated blankly.

Daddyji looked back at him. He held out his wrists as if for handcuffs.

"You are going to arrest me for that then?" he asked.

"No," Ghote said. "Not you, Daddyji."

Again he surprised the gang boss.

"Not me? Then who?"

"I have come to arrest your brother, Piloo."

"Piloo? But you cannot do that. Why, my witnesses will be speaking the truth for him."

"Not when the charge is taking away feloniously from the Galerie Sodawaterwala a quantity of art material—namely,

six pictures in clay."

Daddyji relaxed visibly.

"Oh, but take, Inspector," he said. "Take the boy, take."

"Take?"

"Yes. Take, take. For some pieces of mud only, he puts himself in danger. Why should I bother with him?"

"But he is your brother."

"Brother, smother. What is brother? He is one of my men. Or until now he was."

Ghote looked at the broad-shouldered crook.

"Perhaps I should warn you," he said, "the boy is likely to get a long sentence. When someone as influential as the Minister has been insulted by him."

"He can go to gaol for all his life. What am I caring?"

"But his pictures," Ghote said.

"Those things. Pah!"

"But do you not know," Ghote continued earnestly, "that the boy has very, very great gifts. Mr. Sodawaterwala says he will be the Indian Hogarth. Hogarth is a very, very famous English artist."

"What is that to me? Here, you will be wanting your evidence, Inspector. Look under that charpoy there. That is where the boy put his bundle. You will find your pictures there."

Ghote went and knelt beside the rope-slung bed, as much to hide his sense of disgust at Daddyji's behaviour as to get hold of the pictures. They were there, sure enough, and he dragged out the bundle and opened it up, thinking all the while, *Yes, the A.C.P. was right. Daddyji is an all-bad man. All-bad.*

"Hey!"

Daddyji's voice came loudly from over Ghote's shoulder.

"Hey, look at that. It is me. Just as I am. It is me playing cards with Iqbal Singh and that idiot Chandra Chagoo. See, he is losing as always. It is on his face. Wonderful, wonderful."

Ghote looked more closely at the six hard-baked clay tablets. It was certainly true. Small though they were, it was

clear beyond doubt that one of the card players was Daddyji, and that on the miniature face of the man the gang boss had pointed out there was an expression of stupid chagrin, as if indeed he was losing at the game and could not understand why.

"Inspector?" Daddyji said, with a note of sudden calculation in his voice.

"What is it?"

"Inspector, I am going to ask you to do something for me."

"For you? You dare to ask?"

Ghote thought with rising anger of how this man was truly all-bad.

"Inspector," Daddyji continued, oblivious of Ghote's plain opposition, "I am asking you to take these pictures now to Mr. Sodawaterwala and to tell him that, of course, Piloo did not steal them. That he brought them here to show to me only. To me, his brother who had raised him from a boy."

"Take the pictures back? To Mr. Sodawaterwala?"

Ghote felt deeply dismayed.

"Then there would be no charge againt Piloo," he said.

"That is right," Daddyji answered cheerfully. "And Piloo can go on and make more and more very good pictures like this. He can become the Indian Highlife."

"Hogarth. Hogarth. But . . . ."

And then an idea came to Ghote, an idea so good it was almost incredible.

"You are quite sure you are wanting me to take back these pictures?" he asked, trying to keep his voice neutral.

"But, yes, yes, yes. It is important for Piloo to have this chance. I may be a bad man, Inspector, but I am not all bad. I have some heart left for the boy."

Quickly, Ghote gathered up the little clay tablets, wrapped them, and took them off.

He took them to Mr. Sodawaterwala in his bed at the J.J. Hospital.

"And, if what Daddyji told me is true," he said after he

had handed them over, "when you get back to your gallery you would find Piloo already back there, making more pictures like these."

Mr. Sodawaterwala smiled through his bruised and battered face. A smile of great gentleness.

"But that is wonderful, Inspector," he said. "Wonderful. And Daddyji himself insisted that you have the pictures? It is yet more wonderful. It restores my faith in humanity."

"Yes," Ghote said, "it would seem that my own belief was all the time right. There is no such thing as the all-bad man. Even Daddyji has in him some spark of goodness. You know that his father, Piloo's father, too, has a gift for modelling in clay. He is making little, somewhat obscene figures to sell to tourists at Flora Fountain. So the strain of the artist comes to the surface if only in appreciation of what is good, even in a fellow like Daddyji."

Mr. Sodawaterwala smiled again.

"But in Piloo," he said, "that strain has gone to the heights. Do you know what I will do for him?"

"It would be something good I am sure."

"I hope so. I am going to hold a first-class, Number One exhibition for him. And, just as soon as I can, I will go back and put these first six pictures of his in the window of the Galerie, as a foretaste."

"Very good, Mr. Sodawaterwala. Very good. And I will see that night and day there are four-five hefty constables guarding that window."

"Guarding?" said Mr. Sodawaterwala. "But surely, Inspector, now that Daddyji has shown he is not all-bad, there is no need for that."

"But there is need, very much of need," Ghote replied. "You see, one of those pictures is very important evidence."

"Evidence? But there is no longer a question of Piloo having stolen any clay. That is ridiculous."

"That is ridiculous, yes. But I will tell you what is not ridiculous: a charge against Daddyji of conspiring with two individuals, namely Iqbal Singh and Chandra Chagoo, to cause damage at the Loafer's Delight Disc Mart."

Mr. Sodawaterwala looked bewildered.

"But I do not understand," he said. "How can one of Piloo's pictures have anything to do with such a place as the Loafer's Delight Disc Mart?"

"Because that picture shows Daddyji was a close acquaintance of those two men, something that up to now he was prepared to manufacture evidence to disprove. One of those pictures shows the three of them playing cards together, clearly as clearly."

"Then you are going to arrest Daddyji?" Mr. Sodawaterwala asked. "But you cannot do that now."

Ghote looked down at him on the smooth white pillow of the hospital bed.

He sighed.

"Yes, Mr. Sodawaterwala," he said, "I can arrest him, and I will. Did you think I can let him go scot-free just because he gave Piloo his chance in life? Yes, even though it was in giving Piloo that chance that he betrayed himself, I must arrest him nevertheless. All-bad or partly good, it is my duty to put him behind the bars, and I will do it." ST

RAY BRADBURY

Ray Bradbury is virtually a living legend. Since becoming a full-time writer in 1943, he's produced short stories, novels, plays, verse, and stories for juveniles in large numbers—collecting prizes, awards, and honors along the way. Though primarily known for his science fiction, he is equally adept at weaving tales of mystery, suspense, horror, and fantasy.

THE UTTERLY PERFECT MURDER was personally selected by Mr. Bradbury as a favorite story for reprinting in the first issue of the new SAINT Magazine.

THE UTTERLY PERFECT MURDER

It was such an utterly perfect, such an incredibly delightful, idea for murder that I was half out of my mind all across America.

The idea had come to me for some reason on my forty-eighth birthday. Why it hadn't come to me when I was thirty or forty, I cannot say. Perhaps those were good years and I sailed through them unaware of time and clocks and the gathering of frost at my temples or the look of the lion about my eyes ....

Anyway, on my forty-eighth birthday, lying in bed that night beside my wife, with my children sleeping through all the other quiet moonlit rooms of my house, I thought:

I will arise and go now and kill Ralph Underhill.

Ralph Underhill! I cried. Who in God's name is *he*?

Thirty-six years later, kill him? For *what*?

Why, I thought, for what he did to me when I was twelve.

My wife woke, an hour later, hearing a noise.

"Doug?" she called. "What are you doing?"

"Packing," I said. "For a journey."

"Oh," she murmured, and rolled over and went to sleep.

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"Board! All aboard!" The porter's cry went down the train platform.

The train shuddered and banged.

"See you!" I cried, leaping up the steps.

"Someday," called my wife, "I wish you'd *fly*!"

Fly? I thought. And spoil thinking about murder all across the plains? Spoil oiling the pistol and loading it and thinking of Ralph Underhill's face when I show up thirty-six years late to settle old scores? Fly? Why, I would rather pack cross-country on foot, pausing by night to build fires and fry my bile and sour spit and eat again my old mummified but still-living antagonisms and touch those bruises which have never healed. Fly?!

The train moved. My wife was gone.

I rode off into the Past.

Crossing Kansas the second night, we hit a beaut of a thunderstorm. I stayed up until four in the morning, listening to the rave of winds and thunders. At the height of the storm, I saw my face, a darkroom negative-print on the cold window glass, and thought:

Where is that fool going?

To kill Ralph Underhill!

Why?

Because!

Remember how he hit my arm? Bruises. I was covered with bruises, both arms; dark blue, mottled black, strange yellow bruises. Hit and run, that was Ralph, hit and run—

And yet . . . you loved him?

Yes, as boys love boys when boys are eight, ten, twelve, and the world is innocent and boys are evil beyond evil because they know not what they do, but do it anyway. So, on some secret level, I *had* to be hurt. We dear fine friends needed each other. I to be hit. He to strike. My scars were the emblem and symbol of our love.

What else makes you want to murder Ralph so late in time?

The train whistle shrieked. Night country rolled by.

And I recalled one spring when I came to school in a

new tweed knicker suit and Ralph knocking me down, rolling me in snow and fresh brown mud. And Ralph laughing and me going home, shame-faced, covered with slime, afraid of a beating, to put on fresh, dry clothes.

Yes! And what *else*?

Remember those toy clay statues you longed to collect from the Tarzan radio show? Statues of Tarzan and Kala the Ape and Numa the Lion, for just twenty-five cents?! Yes, yes! Beautiful! Even now, in memory, O the sound of the Ape Man swinging through green jungles far away, ululating! But who had twenty-five cents in the middle of the Great Depression? No one.

Except Ralph Underhill.

And one day Ralph asked you if you wanted one of the statues.

Wanted! you cried. Yes! Yes!

That was the same week your brother, in a strange seizure of love mixed with contempt, gave you his old, but expensive, baseball-catcher's mitt.

"Well," said Ralph, "I'll give you my extra Tarzan statue if you'll give me that catcher's mitt."

Fool! I thought. The statue's worth twenty-five cents. The glove cost two dollars! No fair! Don't!

But I raced back to Ralph's house with the glove and gave it to him. And he, smiling a worse contempt than my brother's, handed me the Tarzan statue and, bursting with joy, I ran home.

My brother didn't find out about his catcher's mitt and the statue for two weeks, and when he did he ditched me when we hiked out in farm country and left me lost because I was such a sap. "Tarzan statues! Baseball mitts!" he cried. "That's the last thing I *ever* give you!"

And somewhere on a country road I just lay down and wept and wanted to die but didn't know how to give up the final vomit that was my miserable ghost.

The thunder murmured.

The rain fell on the cold Pullman-car windows.

What *else*? Is that the list?

No. One final thing, more terrible than all the rest.

In all the years you went to Ralph's house to toss up small bits of gravel on his Fourth of July six-in-the-morning fresh dewy window or to call him forth for the arrival of dawn circuses in the cold fresh blue railroad stations in late June or late August, in all those years, never once did Ralph run to your house.

Never once in all the years did he, or anyone else, prove their friendship by coming by. The door never knocked. The window of your bedroom never faintly clattered and belled with a high-tossed confetti of small dusts and rocks.

And you always knew that the day you stopped going to Ralph's house, calling up in the morn, that would be the day your friendship ended.

You tested it once. You stayed away for a whole week. Ralph never called. It was as if you had died, and no one came to your funeral.

When you saw Ralph at school, there was no surprise, no query, not even the faintest lint of curiosity to be picked off your coat. Where *were* you, Doug? I need someone to beat. Where you *been*, Doug. I got no one to *pinch*!

Add all the sins up. But especially think on the last:

He never came to my house. He never sang up to my early-morning bed or tossed a wedding rice of gravel on the clear panes to call me down to joy and summer days.

And for this last thing, Ralph Underhill, I thought, sitting in the train at four in the morning, as the storm faded, and I found tears in my eyes, for this last and final thing, for that I shall kill you tomorrow night.

Murder, I thought, after thirty-six years. Why, God, you're madder than Ahab.

The train wailed. We ran cross-country like a mechanical Greek Fate carried by a black metal Roman Fury.

They say you can't go home again.

That is a lie.

If you are lucky and time it right, you arrive at sunset when the old town is filled with yellow light.

I got off the train and walked up through Green Town and looked at the courthouse, burning with sunset light. Every tree was hung with gold doubloons of color. Every roof and coping and bit of gingerbread was purest brass and ancient gold.

I sat in the courthouse square with dogs and old men until the sun had set and Green Town was dark. I wanted to savor Ralph Underhill's death.

No one in history had ever done a crime like this.

I would stay, kill, depart, a stranger among strangers.

How would anyone dare to say, finding Ralph Underhill's body on his doorstep, that a boy aged twelve, arriving on a kind of Time Machine train, traveled out of hideous self-contempt, had gunned down the Past? It was beyond all reason. I was safe in my pure insanity.

Finally, at eight-thirty on this cool October night, I walked across town, past the ravine.

I never doubted Ralph would still be there.

People do, after all, move away ....

I turned down Park Street and walked two hundred yards to a single streetlamp and looked across. Ralph Underhill's white two-story Victorian house waited for me.

And I could feel him *in* it.

He was there, forty-eight years old, even as I felt myself here, forty-eight, and full of an old and tired and self-devouring spirit.

I stepped out of the light, opened my suitcase, put the pistol in my right-hand coat pocket, shut the case, and hid it in the bushes where, later, I would grab it and walk down into the ravine and across town to the train.

I walked across the street and stood before his house, and it was the same house I had stood before thirty-six years ago. There were the windows upon which I had hurled those spring bouquets of rock in love and total giving. There were the sidewalks, spotted with firecracker burn marks from ancient July Fourths when Ralph and I had just blown up the whole damned world, shrieking celebrations.

I walked up on the porch and saw on the mailbox in

small letters: UNDERHILL.

What if his wife answers?

No, I thought, he himself, with absolute Greek-tragic perfection, will open the door and take the wound and almost gladly die for old crimes and minor sins somehow grown to crimes.

I rang the bell.

Will he know me, I wondered, after all this time? In the instant before the first shot, *tell* him your name. He must know who it is.

Silence.

I rang the bell again.

The doorknob rattled.

I touched the pistol in my pocket, my heart hammering, but did not take it out.

The door opened.

Ralph Underhill stood there.

He blinked, gazing out at me.

"Ralph?" I said.

"Yes—?" he said.

We stood there, riven, for what could not have been more than five seconds. But, O Christ, many things happened in those five swift seconds.

I saw Ralph Underhill.

I saw him clearly.

And I had not seen him since I was twelve.

Then, he had towered over me to pummel and beat and scream.

Now he was a little old man.

I am five feet eleven.

But Ralph Underhill had not grown much from his twelfth year on.

The man who stood before me was no more than five feet two inches tall.

I towered over *him*.

I gasped. I stared. I saw more.

I was forty-eight years old.

But Ralph Underhill, forty-eight, had lost most of his hair,

and what remained was threadbare gray, black, and white. He looked sixty or sixty-five.

I was in good health.

Ralph Underhill was waxen pale. There was a knowledge of sickness in his face. He had traveled in some sunless land. He had a ravaged and sunken look. His breath smelled of funeral flowers.

All this, perceived, was like the storm of the night before, gathering all its lightnings and thunders into one bright concussion. We stood in the explosion.

So this is what I came for? I thought. This, then, is the truth. This dreadful instant in time. Not to pull out the weapon. *Not* to kill. No, no. But simply—

To see Ralph Underhill as he *is* in this hour.

That's all.

Just to be here, stand here, and look at him as he has become.

Ralph Underhill lifted one hand in a kind of gesturing wonder. His lips trembled. His eyes flew up and down my body. His mind measured this giant who shadowed his door. At last his voice, so small, so frail, blurted out:

"Doug—?"

I recoiled.

"Doug?" he gasped, "is that *you*?"

I hadn't expected that. People don't remember! They can't! Across the years? Why would he know, bother, summon up, recognize, call?

I had a wild thought that what had happened to Ralph Underhill was that after I left town, half of his life had collapsed. I had been the center of his world, someone to attack, beat, pummel, bruise. His whole life had cracked by my simple act of walking away thirty-six years ago.

Nonsense! Yet, some small crazed mouse of wisdom scuttered about my brain and screeched what it knew: You needed Ralph, but *more*! he needed *you*! And you did the only unforgivable, the wounding, thing! You vanished.

"Doug?" he said again, for I was silent there on the porch with my hands at my sides. "Is that you?"

This was the moment I had come for.

At some secret blood level, I had always known I would not use the weapon. I had brought it with me, yes, but Time had gotten here before me, and age, and smaller, more terrible deaths ....

Bang.

Six shots through the heart.

But I didn't use the pistol. I only whispered the sound of the shots with my mouth. With each whisper, Ralph Underhill's face aged another ten years. By the time I reached the last shot, he was one hundred ten years old.

"Bang," I whispered. "Bang. Bang. Bang. Bang. Bang."

His body shook with the impact.

"You're dead. Oh, God, Ralph, you're dead."

I turned and walked down the steps and reached the street before he called.

"Doug, is that *you*?"

I did not answer, walking.

"Answer me!" he cried, weakly. "Doug! Doug Spaulding, is that you? Who is that? Who are you?"

I got my suitcase and walked down into the cricket night and darkness of the ravine and across the bridge and up the stairs, going away.

"Who is that?" I heard his voice wail a last time.

A long way off, I looked back.

All the lights were on all over Ralph Underhill's house. It was as if he had gone around and put them all on after I left.

On the other side of the ravine I stopped on the lawn in front of the house where I had been born.

Then I picked up a few bits of gravel and did the thing that had never been done, ever in my life.

I tossed the few bits of gravel up to tap that window where I had lain every morning of my first twelve years. I called my own name. I called me down in friendship to play in some long summer that no longer was.

I stood waiting just long enough for my other young self to come down to join me.

Then swiftly, fleeing ahead of the dawn, we ran out of Green Town and back, thank you, dear Christ, back toward Now and Today for the rest of my life. ST

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GROOVY DETECTIVE

Pete McDonald, Chief of Design for Firestone Tire and Rubber Company in Akron, Ohio, is also a crime fighter. His vast knowledge of tire tread wear and design has enabled him to help police solve five homicides.

McDonald began his tire detective career in 1976, when police in Monterey, California, investigating a double murder, sent a photograph of a tire print to Firestone's headquarters. McDonald looked upon it as a challenge. "Right off, I knew it was a nine-rib tire," McDonald said, "even though the whole width of the tire was not shown.

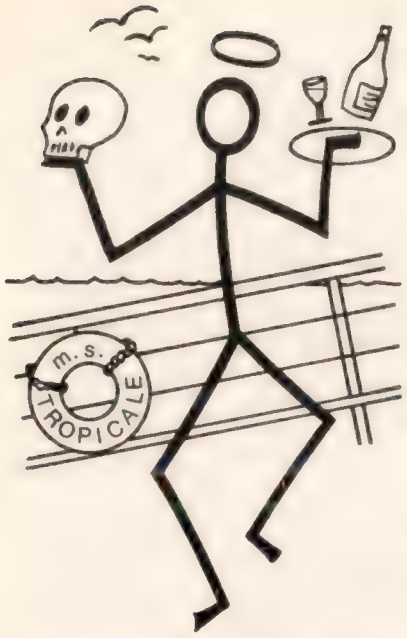
"I figured there was a good chance it was a Parnelli Jones Firestone, and asked one of our draftsmen to transpose a single groove onto transparent paper to use as an overlay. Eureka! It fit the photograph like a glove."

A check of the area eventually led to one of the buyers of this high performance tire confessing to the murders.

A few years ago, McDonald, working with a Polaroid snapshot of a tire print found at the scene of a kidnap-murder in Akron, Ohio, advised police to look for an automobile with a special model of Duralon tires. When the suspect was picked up, McDonald smeared ink on the suspect's tires, drove the vehicle over white cardboard, and made a positive identification. The suspect was convicted and later sentenced to life in prison.

"Working in criminal investigations has been fun for me," McDonald stated. "So far, I have a perfect record."

Harry Squires



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CHRISTIANNA BRAND

Grand lady of British mystery, suspense, and "mainstream" fiction, Christianna Brand also possesses a charming flair for humor (pardon me, humour*). Her unique style in the use of spelling and dialogue sets her apart from most other writers. But her fame and honors are not confined to the British Isles. Fortunately, her delightful stories are as well known in Europe and America as they are in her home country.*

TO THE WIDOW is a bubbling concoction of champagne and several other sparkling ingredients—including droll characters, witty dialogue, and ingenious plot twists. We present, with pride, another clever tale in the Brand Manner.

TO THE WIDOW

It fell to Dr. Leo Theobald—described by himself, though not by any honest member of the profession, as a psychiatrist—to save a young woman's neck by giving evidence in court that at the time she slew her husband she had been in the grip of a compulsive urge to do so. From then on, he found his consulting room besieged by females confiding a variety of similar obsessions. He took down all they said on two sets of tapes which he humourously described (to himself) as *His* and *Hers*, and from then on prospered exceedingly.

It was not entirely astonishing, then, that on a Monday morning he should receive the confessions of no less than two pretty ladies, each declaring a compelling desire to murder her husband.

The second of these he took very seriously indeed. He *was* her husband.

Many of his patients introduced themselves cautiously as Mrs. Brown, Smith, or Jones. These two were no exception.

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"Ten thirty—a Mrs. Brown," said his secretary with a glint of humour. His secretary's name really was Mrs. Jones. "Mrs. Ponsardine, actually. Penelope. A well-to-do widow about to marry a gent called Lord Briggs, with a lot of money."

"Money!" said Dr. Theobald, to whom this was, bar none, the most beautiful word in the language.

Mrs. (Ponsardine) Brown—Penelope—proved to be a very kempt and well-preserved lady. He invited her tenderly to relax upon the consulting-room couch. "Relax, relaaaaaax! Fade away dreamily into semi-consciousness. Your hands are like jelly," said Dr. Theobald encouragingly, "melted into one another. You can't feel your body, your legs. You can't feel your feet .... "

Oh, good! thought Penelope, earnestly endeavouring to fade away into semi-consciousness. Her new shoes were *killing* her.

Dr. Theobald switched on his tape recorders—from the unconcealed one he would later extract the casette and give it to her to take home, thus proving that all was safe and aboveboard—and switched off the lights. "I shall sit at the head of the couch with only this tiny lamp on, to make my notes by—quite out of your sight so that you may forget all about me and just speak your thoughts aloud."

He seated himself as described, and by the light of the tiny lamp gave himself over to the Quick Crossword. The casette lasted forty minutes, which often gave him time to finish it. The maunderings of the average patient were of a tedium inexpressible. Anything of interest the invaluable Mrs. Jones, his secretary, could extract from his secret tape when the patient was gone. It did not matter to Dr. Theobald how tedious Mrs. Jones might find them.

"Just speak your thoughts aloud, dear lady. Dreamily, dreeeeeeeeamily .... "

Mrs. (Ponsardine) Brown—Penelope—dreamily obliged. She had, she said, this irresistible urge to murder her husband.

Dr. Theobald abandoned the crossword. He suggested after a moment's thought, "But your husband is dead."

"I know," said Penelope. "That's what makes it so awful."

"But then—why should you wish to murder him?"

"Well, to be free to marry Lord Briggs," said Mrs. Ponsardine reasonably.

"But you're going to marry Lord Briggs anyway." (Goodness, how promising!) "You do seem to be in some confusion. Tell me all about it."

Dreamily, dreamily, Penelope told him all about it.

An hour later, the lady having come to with a good deal of gasping and demanding to know where she was, she departed, clutching her highly inflammable casette. Dr. Theobald locked away *His* in his safe and inserted new ones. Mrs. Jones ushered in the next patient. "Mrs. Smith," said Mrs. Jones, deadpan. "Renée."

Dr. Theobald received his lady wife without demonstration. Such syndromes were by no means unknown in the profession where, indeed, all things are possible if you only get the right psychiatrist. This time, however, he did not trouble himself with the crossword but, when her extremities were sufficiently congealed, exhorted her just to speak her thoughts aloud.

"Dreamily," crooned Dr. Theobald, all agog at the head of the couch. "Dreeeeeeeeamily . . . . "

Mrs. (Theobald) Smith—Renée—spoke her thoughts aloud. "I seem to have this irresistible urge to murder my husband."

"Oh," said the doctor rather blankly. The feeling was creeping up on him that this was becoming an increasingly curious day. He said at last, "But why?"

"He is such an odious little man," said Renée, more dreamy by the minute. "Rather paunchy, you know, as bald as a coot, and his nose is all peppered with tiny black dots, as though the little hairs had come to the surface and suddenly given up in despair."

"Perhaps he shaves them," said Dr. Theobald, as this was what he did.

"No one but my husband would have to shave his nose,"

said Renée. "Besides, his eyes are like frog spawn."

"He can hardly help his appearance," said the doctor, nettled. Nor, he suggested, was it quite sufficient reason for murder.

"Oh, but it's worse than that," said Renée. "He's awful. So uncouth. He puts ice into everything—even into a liqueur brandy. And mean about money—which happens to be *my* money. And so cold and uncaring . . . . "

Dr. Theobald brought the session to an early close and did not offer a casette to be taken home with her. He thought it wise, however, to propose a further session as early as possible.

"Oh, yes," said his patient blissfully. "And then I can tell you all about my lovely new lover."

The patient having departed to cook his lunch—his consulting rooms were part of his private house, though approached by a separate entrance—he summoned his secretary, for he felt badly shaken and in need of comfort. "Get up on the couch," said Dr. Theobald and scrambled up after her. He was not so cold and uncaring as all *that*.

The couch was narrow and, for two, unaccommodating, but over several years he had found this problem not insurmountable. Nowadays, however, Mrs. Jones was proving somewhat narrow and unaccommodating, too. "Oh, Muriel, you never used to make this fuss!"

"But, Leo, I'm a married lady now. I simply can't go on with it."

"That weed, all books and artiness! How could you have married him? A lot of affectations about smoked salmon and vintages. Sit him down to a good slab of Canadian tinned and a bottle of plonk and he'd never know the difference. *I* wouldn't."

"I know," said Muriel. "That's why I married *him*."

"I'd have married you in a minute, Mu, you know that, if it hadn't been for Renée. I mean, Renée's got the money, hasn't she? But you know I'm mad about you. Always have been." As Mu showed signs of returning to her office desk,

he implored, "Tomorrow night, then?"

"No, Leo, I'm staying home."

"But on Tuesdays he goes off to this horticultural club of his."

"Nothing horticultural about it," said Muriel. "I've told you. It's just a sort of literary joke. The Herbiferous Club. They meet to discuss the works of an author they're interested in called Herbert Ferris. Herb Ferris, you see. But you wouldn't understand."

"What I would understand would be a night on the tiles with you. Tomorrow evening, Mu—please do!"

"Not tomorrow or ever again," said Muriel. "That's all done with. My husband wouldn't like it."

Dr. Theobald, left alone, lay back on the couch and gave himself over to an irresistible urge to murder Mu's husband.

Mrs. Ponsardine's promising sessions went on apace. Mrs. Ponsardine had dropped the "Brown" now and become simply Penelope, who was going to marry rich Lord Briggs. At least she was if Dr. Theobald kept very, very quiet about these consulting-room revelations. For, as he had explained to her, clearly a guilt complex had arisen in regard to some earlier misdemeanour, and nothing but a full confession could let her off this subterraneously irritant hook. Penelope, therefore, in an extremity of dreaminess, unburdened herself.

The late Ponsardine had been a research chemist who had—predictably late in life, for really was he not asking for trouble?—evolved a concoction which, taken with alcohol, would bring about a rapid though painless death. And she, driven to madness by her passion for Lord Briggs, had administered a sufficient dose to the unsuspecting apothecary in a plate of soup, closely followed by a postprandial brandy. Since none but he had known of his discovery, and the symptoms might be variously ascribed, no following suspicion had attached to her.

Dr. Theobald's fees took a sudden upward thrust, and he strongly advised her to hand over to him the remains of the

dangerous potion. And just in case, he said, her subconscious should be playing tricks on her, he would test what she brought on a suitable animal, and she should then wrap up the remains securely herself, and herself stow it away in his safe.

A very small dose indeed—leaving lots over—put a happily peaceful end to his neighbour's very old and, as it happened, very disagreeable dog. It rebelled against a stiffish lacing of flavourless vodka in its bowl of milk, but made no protest at all against Brand-X, as the doctor had now christened it—more wittily than he knew.

"And it seems to have no taste at all," he said, sniffing at the little bottle—holding it, however, wrapped carefully in a handkerchief. (To have the phial liberally covered with his own fingerprints was no part of the doctor's vaguely forming plan.) "And no odour."

"That's why my Everard thought it might be so dangerous. And why, as he could see no purpose for it but—killing people," said his relict, faltering a little, "he decided that no one else should ever know about it."

"He was a public benefactor," said Dr. Theobald reverently—not referring, however, to the late Everard's concern for posterity.

So Penelope sat down and, all too freely handling it, carefully parcelled up the little phial and saw it bestowed in the doctor's private safe. If it seemed a little odd that, having ascertained its authenticity, he should not immediately destroy the stuff, she said nothing. With the exalted marriage now imminent, her situation was clearly dicey in the extreme, and she meekly paid up a further astronomical fee and went through to the office. Mu reappeared, now with Renée. "Mrs. Smith," said Muriel, ushering her in.

Renée—notwithstanding that she had just arrived in fact from the same house—wore a hat and coat and carried a handbag and gloves, together with a book, which she placed with the gloves on a corner of the desk before disposing herself upon the couch and losing touch with her hands and feet and drooling off into the darkness on the eternal sub-

ject of her unlovable husband and the miraculously contrasting boyfriend. Dr. Theobald deafened himself to the former, but was becoming increasingly riveted by the latter. They had a little love nest, it seemed, and once a week would spend the evening there. More was impossible, for he was, alas, a married man and she, in fact, a married woman. "But my husband . . . . "

"Never mind *him*," said the doctor, who had no great wish for further recorded revelations of his own shortcomings. "You've never told me this man's name."

"I call him Tybalt—Romeo and Juliet, you know . . . . "

"Where do they come in?" said the doctor, who was not on the whole of a highly literary bent.

"Well, Mercutio's Tybalt, you know. 'Good King of Cats.' "

"Tibbles. That's what old women call their pussycats."

"And he's *my* pussycat," said Renée fondly. "I shall call him Tibbles, too."

"And what would be dear Tibbles' surname?"

"Well, Smith," said Mrs. Smith. She explained that Smith wasn't really her name. Nor his either, as a matter of fact. They'd just made it up between them. She'd have preferred Lyon, herself, or something noble and appropriate like that, but no, he had said that his real name was plain Jones and the next plainest thing was plain Smith. So there they were, plain Mr. and Mrs. Smith.

I only wish you were, thought Dr. Theobald. But a glimmer of light which had recently begun to glow in his consciousness was growing steadily brighter. "Well, so tell me about your Tibbles."

Mrs. Smith was only too happy to oblige. As feline as his name, it seemed—a very lion of svelteness and strength. (Mrs. Smith here roused herself sufficiently from her semi-hypnotic condition to be able to open one eye and cast it rather anxiously towards Dr. Theobald's half-hidden chair, as though to assure herself that this time she hadn't gone too far, then relaxed again.) And so tremendously handsome. The complexion very fair, yet manly. The splendid mane of hair, the Grecian nose . . . . And intellectual! "He does the

crossword every day—not that childish little quick thing some people do, but the *Times*!" And all the Arts. But most of all, Tibbles was devoted to literature—to literature and to painting. "The Impressionists! His little Renoir, he calls me. Not just Renée, but Renoir, his precious Renoir . . . . "

"You call him Tibbles and he calls you Renwar?" said Dr. Theobald. A right pair, he thought—Tibbles and Renwar.

"Well, the painter, you know. One of those young girls with their little half-open mouths, so deliciously smiling, half-innocent, half-naughty, so inscrutable . . . . "

Dr. Theobald had indeed observed of late a tendency in his lady to go around with her mouth hanging slightly open, but simply registered that she looked, if anything, a little more gormless than ever. "So once a week, you and Tibbles engage in these intellectual evenings?"

"Well, I know it's rather wicked but, you see, on Tuesday nights my husband is always out . . . . "

"On Tuesdays?" said Dr. Theobald, and the sudden incandescence of the glimmer almost blinded him. Tuesdays had been the regular days of his evenings out with Mu—her husband being absent at this precious club of his, where they met and discussed the immortal works of this writer they were so keen on. The Herbiferous Club.

On an inspiration, he rose and passed silently by the corner of his desk where lay the book his wife had brought with her. Accustomed to the gloom, his eyes could just discern the title. BLEST PAIR OF LOVERS. Well, that seemed appropriate enough. By—sure enough—some fellow calling himself Herbert Ferris.

How many evenings, he asked himself with chill calculation, had Mu's husband—who called himself plain Smith when his name was plain Jones—found himself obliged to miss the meetings with his cronies of the Herbiferous Club?

He crept back to his place. No doubt wearing, in the encircling gloom, the little Renwar smile, his lady wife was blathering on. ". . . and such delicious little dinners. I do them myself, of course. Such a change to have someone who can appreciate anything above tinned soup and hashed mutton

with lots of Dad's Relish . . . ."

"What's wrong with Dad's Relish?" said Dr. Theobald, whose favourite sauce, by a strange coincidence, this was. But Renée was rattling on, regardless. ". . . and with the dinner, a perfect champagne. Just half a bottle because I don't drink, you know; though of course it's *not* quite the same as the full bottle. And then a glass of the very best brandy that money can buy . . . ."

"Whose money?" asked Dr. Theobald, apprehensively.

"Well, it's mine, really," said Renée, automatically on the defensive. "Tybalt—Tibbles—rebels. He's such a *man* you know, the real gentleman, and wildly generous with money. But I insist on playing hostess, whatever it costs me."

Dr. Theobald perceived that Tibbles was going to have to quit the scene of these revels even sooner than one had hitherto vaguely anticipated, and for reasons other than those connected solely with Mu. He began to build upon what had come to seem very promising foundations. "And after dinner? . . . "

"Well, we just say good-night and go home," said Renwar, suddenly rather bleak.

"What, no love-play?" Dr. Theobald plunged for five minutes into a fairly deep pond of weedy analysis. "No sex-u-al activity?" The psychiatrist in him rose in revolt against so uncharacteristic a minnow fished up from the analytical pond.

"Well, but he *is* a married man. And I'm afraid the wife is rather—demanding. It's not very nice for *me*," said Renée disconsolately. "Is it?"

It was not very nice for Dr. Theobald either. His Mu! But the thing was becoming more and more promising. "You mean he is—let us say overtired?" It sounded not at all that leonine and manly, but then such a vision reposed largely in the mind of the infatuate Renwar. Dr. Theobald, briefly introduced to Mu's Mr. Jones, had judged him to be a good deal more high-browed than high-powered. "Or at any rate—*too* tired!" He lowered his voice conspiratorially. "You'll never have heard, dear lady, of Brand-X?"

"Brand-X?"

"That's just my name for it. To save embarrassment. So many of my lady patients .... These little difficulties are not uncommon. I tell them, 'What your gentleman needs, my dear, is a drop of jolly old Brand-X. Pop a dose into his glass tonight,' I say, 'and then a good snort of something after dinner—and away we go!' " He kept a supply of the stuff by him. Nicer for the ladies than trotting off to the chemist's on so delicate an errand. "And you shall have a little bottle of it right now and next Tuesday—why, that's tomorrow! Just empty the whole thing into Tibbles' champagne—it's quite tasteless. And then, afterwards, he'll be having his fine, expensive," said Dr. Theobald, grinding his teeth, "liqueur brandy .... It won't work without quite a bit of alcohol."

"You don't think he might feel a little humiliated?"

"But you wouldn't *tell* him!" cried her husband, almost fainting. "A proud man like that! Such a lion! Of course don't tell him. Don't tell a soul!" He laboured the point for some minutes. "Tip it into his glass, but secretly. The champagne and the glass of fine brandy, and you'll find that all of a sudden, my dear—whacko!" Quite whacko'd himself by the shock she had given him—*tell* the wretched fellow, indeed!—he almost yanked her off the couch, allowed her to help herself to the small package in the safe, and accepted her almost maudlin thanks. On feet perhaps not yet quite sufficiently thawed from their gelatinous condition, she tottered off through the door leading to the patients' entrance.

Dr. Theobald tottered to the door leading to the private part of his house and so to the dining room. He felt he could do with a very stiff whiskey and soda.

The decanter was empty. Rooting round for replenishment, he found, tucked not too unobtrusively away, a half-bottle of champagne. Viewve Clikott it seemed to be called. A lot of French nonsense. He had a vague idea that Viewve meant a widow and the champagne was so familiarly called—by those who cared to show off about that kind of thing. Well, well—by day after tomorrow, that should apply very nicely to his Mu; and with Renée proved clearly to

have administered the dose! . . . A little advance celebration would by no means come amiss. His favourite dinner was on tonight's menu—oxtail soup, mince and "mushy peas," and a couple of cartons of Chokletrife. The champers would go down a treat with that lot. He poured himself out a handsome tot of whiskey, meanwhile, and sat back to contemplate the joys of this evening's meal.

His secretary, having ushered Renwar into the consulting room, had returned to her desk where Penelope Ponsardine awaited her. "Your next appointment?" As she scribbled it down she said, not looking up from the desk diary, "You settle your fees personally with the doctor, Mrs. Ponsardine? And in cash?"

"I prefer it that way," said Mrs. Ponsardine, cagily.

"So many patients seem to, I find," said Mrs. Jones. "After the first few sessions with Dr. Theobald. He prefers it, too—very much prefers it. I gather from the ladies," she added casually, "that the fees are rising."

"You can say that again," said Penelope. But giving her no time to do so, suggested as though on an impulse, "You wouldn't be free for dinner tonight, Mrs. Jones? And a little chat?"

"I might," said Dr. Theobald's secretary. "In a very good cause."

They met in a restaurant of Mrs. Ponsardine's choice. "You've saved me a nice private table, Henri? And a bottle of the One and Only?"

"Caviar on the table, Madame Ponsardin, and the champagne coming up. *Bien frais*!" said Henri, tossing a kiss into the air, in a gesture not perhaps owing a great deal to his native Blackpool. "But first, with the caviar, the two tiny glasses of vodka . . . . "

Mrs. Jones, settling herself into the nice private corner, watched fondly the approach of the ice bucket, the small head gold-wrapped on its long Modigliani neck and sloping green glass shoulders. "You are a connoisseur?"

"The veuve Cliquot was a forebear of mine." She raised her glass. "To the Widow!"

Mrs. Jones also raised her glass. "As one imminently threatened with that condition, may I drink to your coming release from it, Mrs. Ponsardine?"

"Whatever do you mean—threatened? But do please call me Penelope, Mrs. Jones."

"And do please call me Muriel, Penelope."

"Not Mu?" said Penelope archly. She explained: "He does sometimes slip up a bit and give things away."

"Yes, well—I used to fancy him, you know. We were both a lot younger. But now I'm married and trying to put an end to it all. Not easy."

"A touch of the backmails?"

"For years, now. And if my husband ever dreamed! . . . So Leo could make things very unpleasant. But *you* know that, Penelope. That's why we're here."

"I was in a state. I blurted out past—misdoings. Like the confessional, I thought. And he does get one very dopey—or did while one was still secure and trustful. He recorded it all, but I didn't worry. He gave me the casette to take away with me. I couldn't know, what I've since realised must be the case, that he was keeping a duplicate locked away in his safe."

"*He* couldn't know that I also had a duplicate," said his secretary. "Of the key."

Penelope went exceedingly pale. "Oh, my God!—you've played back the tapes?"

"Every last one. He takes such nice long lunch hours, the greedy old pig! The dull ones he makes me read anyway, but I wasn't standing for that . . . . "

"If he should tell George—Lord Briggs! If he should go to the police! I mean—I know to you I may seem to have been very wicked, Muriel . . . . "

"That's between you and the late Ponsardine," said Muriel. "For the rest—it's very simple. Dr. Theobald has discovered your deep, dark secret. You murdered your husband."

"Oh, Muriel . . . . "

"Don't worry too much," said Muriel. "You see, I have discovered *his* deep, dark secret. He has made all arrangements to murder mine."

So neat. So easy. So safe. "He gets the little phial from you, Penelope—the widow's cruse, we might aptly call it? Tries it out on the wretched dog—just what he would do, though certainly it was a horrid old thing and better off dead anyway—"

"A pretty fair description of my late husband, Muriel. Do believe me!"

"... making sure it can never be proved that he's handled the poison. If he ever gets to use it, *you* aren't going to tell anyone about it, are you?—complete with your prints and with all those dangerous casettes locked away in his safe." She recounted the contents of Renée's tape, made that afternoon. "The plan being that poor Renée shall dump the stuff into my husband's drink at tomorrow's tryst, and later ply him with brandy. Then she gets a life sentence, probably in a criminal lunatic bin—and he gets me. Can you beat it?"

Penelope might be said in her time indeed to have beaten it. She was shocked and horrified nevertheless. "But she would explain."

"Who's going to believe her? All those lovely tapes about urges to murder her husband—confided *to* her husband under the delusion that he's never set eyes on her before. Batty as a crumpet. And then on and on about her so-called lover—i.e., my husband."

"You don't believe that your husband was her lover?"

"Not for a moment. But the point is that Leo believes it."

"I wonder he didn't advise Renée to take a dose of the stuff, too," said Penelope, "and get rid of them both, at one fell swoop."

"You have to take alcohol with it, and Renée doesn't drink," said Muriel, at the same time registering a conclusion that rich Lord Briggs had better behave himself if he wished to attain to a ripe old age.

Penelope herself may have felt her intervention to have smacked a trifle too much of the professional, for she rather

hastily suggested that the Law would surely have doubted any impulsion on Renée's part to have murdered beloved Tibbles. The tapes would hardly have prepared them for that.

"Leo will suggest a shift in aggressions. He can wipe from the tape the part where she confesses that, after she's exhausted herself whipping up the little dinners and what not, Tibbles just slopes off home to the demanding wife. So now, only with a change of object, back she comes with the compulsive urge. With which, in the past, you yourself have been all too familiar."

"As you are, my dear, in the present. To murder Dr. Theobald."

"Common to both of us," agreed Muriel, unruffled. "I'm only saying that that makes twice for you." Fortunately, she added, they need do nothing positive about it. Just by sitting here, they were letting it happen. "At this very moment, I wouldn't be surprised . . . . "

And indeed, at that very moment, Dr. Theobald, having surveyed the steaming bowl of canned oxtail, was issuing orders. "I just fancy a drop of champagne for my supper. And don't tell me there's none, because I've sussed out your fine, precious bottle. So fetch it from the icebox, and a couple of lumps of ice with it."

"Oh, Leo, you found? . . . I just thought . . . . "

"Well, don't think. Fetch the bottle and some ice."

"But, Leo—not ice! It's a vintage Veuve Cliquot. In the 'fridge! Oh, *no*! And then—you're not going to insist on putting ice in it?"

"Of course I damn well insist. And don't stand there with your mouth open," said Leo, irritably, "looking what I suppose you imagine is . . . . " What had been the word? The Renwar smile. Yes, that had been it—inscrutable. "Don't stand there looking inscrutable. Go and get the bottle and some lumps of ice."

"Yes, Leo," said Renwar, looking not noticeably any more scrutable.

He took a bit longer than the poor old dog, to die. There was no pain but, equally, no point in resistance. Nothing was known of the poison nor, therefore, of any antidote—and anyway, how confess to knowledge of its existence? The bitch! he thought. She's done for me. His failing mind wandered, blundering, over recent recollections. The lover. Blond, handsome, svelte .... And an intellectual. All that guff about meetings at the Herbiferous Club. On the other hand—it had been Mu who had said he went out to the club. Renée had never mentioned it. "Y'r boyfriend .... Thought you meant ... Mu's husband .... "

"I can't hear you too well, Leo. But Mr. Jones—good heavens, no!"

"Then how could you? ... Highbrowshtuff .... "

He lay, an unlovely log, on the dining-room floor. She sat quietly, curled up beside him. "Well, I'm not really such a dud, you know, as you've always suggested I was. I'm quite capable of understanding a bit about food and wine—and about music and painting and so on. Even of appreciating a book by Herbert Ferris."

He mumbled out, "But—s'lover .... "

"Oh, Leo! Well, you see .... I described him to the psychiatrist. Everything. Nothing to do with Muriel's Mr. Jones—just everything my husband was not. Splendid physique—you should see his horrid little paunch! Fairskinned—my husband has little black dots .... "

"Ll'r't, ll'r't," groaned Dr. Theobald.

"And—leonine. Tibbles, I called him in my mind. I'm sort of vague about how that name arose. I seem to be very vague about a lot of things. But Tibbles is a cat, and a cat can be a lion, and a lion is a leo, Leo." And she seemed all of a sudden to emerge from a sort of—dream. "But how could you know about my lover? Only if you were—oh, my goodness, Leo! What a muddle I've been in. That psychiatrist—that was you all the time!"

If Leo could have spoken to be understood, he would have been understood to say, "As you bloody well knew."

"So you really should have caught on to it. All those

clues. I mean, Tibbles—it was you who invented Tibbles. From Tybalt. Only you don't know your Shakespeare, Leo, do you? I think you thought Romeo and Juliet were some people I'd dragged into the conversation. Mercutio's Tybalt, I told you—'Good King of Cats.' And the king of cats is a lion, and a lion is a leo—a Leo. So you see, it was all there, all laid out in front of you—my fantasy creation of a lover whom you could well have recognised as everything that I'd have liked you to be, and you were not. I mean—putting ice in a beautiful champagne! Insisting. Admit that I did beg you not to. I did give you a chance. The stuff was *in* the ice, you see." She added, leaning over him a little puzzled, "This seems a funny way for it to be beginning to work."

"For *what* to be beginning to work?" screamed Dr. Theobald without a single sound.

"Well, the aphrodisiac," said Renwar. "Jolly old Brand-X."

The three ladies met at Penelope's wedding. She found the other two ensconced at a nice little table—well in the path of the waiters circulating freely with their cool green bottles—and sat down to spend a moment with them. "Well, my dears!"

"Well, my dear!" Muriel waited until Henri had departed —after placing before them their own ice bucket and bottle. Handing over a small brown paper packet, she said, "A wedding present for you, Penelope."

"Oh, Muriel—my casettes?"

"Their remains." That mysterious little conflagration in the consulting-room safe, said Muriel. She couldn't imagine what had happened. And just before the police had got there. So embarrassing for her. But meanwhile, the confidences of all those other poor sinners, she said limpidly—burnt to ashes.

"Poor Leo," said Renée. "To think of so much potential blackmail money in ashes!"

"Where poor Leo almost certainly is now," said his Mu, "it will have been in ashes long ago, anyway."

"Renée," said Penelope. "You give me a wedding present,

too. Put an end to my suspense. All that time—you were leading him along by the nose?"

"Oh, Penelope, not by the nose. *His* nose! . . . "

"Yes, yes, we know all about his nose. By—a noose, then?"

"Oh, no," said Renée, allowing her mouth to hang very slightly open. "Only teasing him. To be able to tell him to his face exactly what I thought of him."

"Yes, but later," said Muriel. "You, also, had access to the tapes."

"Who, me? How could I have?"

"Oh, come off it, Renée! Living in the same house—keys nipped out of his trousers pocket while he snored away .... And you listened to Penelope's tapes, too .... "

Penelope experienced a moment of anxiety, but reflected that Dr. Theobald's widow was hardly in less dangerous case than herself. "So you knew what Brand-X really was."

"Well, an aphrodisiac, wasn't it? That's what he'd told me—the police found it all on my tapes. Jolly old Brand-X. He *told* me," insisted Renée.

"And persuaded you to give a dose to your fantasy lover."

"Ah, my fantasy lover! Only somehow—I simply can't think how—Leo had quite misinterpreted the fantasy, hadn't he? My husband—tricking me into giving a dose of Brand-X in a glass of champagne to my lover. And all the time, my husband *was* my lover."

Brand-X. Penelope and Renwar and Mu—all safe and sound and happy now, thanks to jolly old Brand-X. The champagne seethed and shimmered in its golden haze. Almost in awe, two ladies lifted their glasses to the third. "To the widow!" they said.

Half-innocent, half-naughty—inscrutable. With deliciously parted lips, the relict of the late Dr. Theobald bestowed upon the ice bucket the little Renoir smile. "To the Widow!" she said. ST

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STEVE RASNIC TEM

In the past few years, Steve Rasnic Tem has sold over 70 short stories, most of them involving horror and dark fantasy, to some of the top publishers in the field—in this country as well as in several others.

Mr. Tem acknowledges A MASK IN MY SACK to be one of his favorite short pieces, and you'll soon see why. It's a chilling, bizarre tale of . . . what? It's indescribable. Read for yourself—and enjoy the tingling fingers of suspense that creep up and down your spine . . . .

A MASK IN MY SACK

I carry a mask in my paper sack. A Halloween mask, I think, bearing the face of a witch or a ghost or a vampire. I don't know. I've never looked into the sack. I'm too afraid.

The streets here seem familiar for some reason, although I know I've never visited this city before. It is a colder climate than I like; I know I would never visit such a cold place under my own free will.

I was married, once, I think. But no more. Something happened to her. Maybe she died, but I don't think so.

Or perhaps I have never been married. I do not know.

I have a mask in my sack. And as I think these things, it must be grinning.

No one is out on the streets at this hour. Perhaps it is because of me the people remain indoors. I have a mask in my sack. And it is grinning.

It is past curfew here, I suspect. People are hiding from the bombs, or the disease-bearing winds, or the armies with their tanks and other machinery. I do not know this to be the case, but I suspect it is the same here as everywhere . . . people locked up in their cellars, drinking quietly with rela-

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tives and friends, hiding from the bullets ....

A leaf falls gently into the rubble-covered street. But when I approach it I discover it is a dead bird, fallen suddenly from the sky, bearing no wounds.

I have a mask in my sack. I know it must be grinning.

This city resembles all the other cities. Windows are shuttered, doors barred or boarded. Few lights burn within. The buildings are usually tall, stucco or cinderblock or textured cement, the first floors having heavy entrance doors reinforced with decorative ironwork. Windows are often bricked in. In many cases the recitation of a password is required before entry can be obtained.

The mask seems to shift eagerly in my sack.

I can hear dogs howling in the distance, their cries echoing off the canyon walls of the empty streets. As in the other cities, the animals have been left to go hungry. The people can't feed them, so the animals are reduced to roaming the streets in packs, seeking other, weaker animals, the intoxicated, the elderly, the lost children. I am suddenly nervous and look around for some quick entrance.

But the mask shifts eagerly in my sack.

I have seen no police officers, no officials, no semblance of authority. I do not know if such officials have left the cities, or if they are hiding in the cellars with the rest of the citizenry, or if the people have had them all killed because of their incompetence.

I never know anything of a city more than what I am able to witness with my own two eyes, and that is usually very little.

Even during the day it seems after sunset here. The shadows blur together; a gray light creeps from wall to wall.

I feel I shouldn't be here; these people don't want me here.

As always, the streets have sustained considerable damage from shellings. Smoke stains the buildings like the shadows of giants who might once have walked this city, but who have gone now, leaving only these gray and black shapes behind.

Store windows have imploded, leaving a layer of broken glass on display shelves. Amputee mannikins dangle obscenely over the sidewalks.

Every building is patterned with bullet holes. Jagged beams protrude like bones. Piles of crumbled brick fill every corner. Paint has peeled in abstract designs from blistering, man-made heat.

Somewhere someone is crying.

Inside my sack the mask is grinning.

I'm not sure what happens next, although it must be the same thing that always happens. But I can't even begin to guess what that might be.

The mask grins and grins and grins.

Someone has left a door slightly cracked. A child's small pale face peers out at me from the narrow opening. Large dark eyes in the pale face. Pale red lips.

I wonder if it always happens this way, but I really can't remember. I walk to the door and open it a bit more, but for some reason I try not to open it too far. I open it just enough to allow my entrance, careful not to open it any further. I hold my sack behind me, as if I were ashamed of it, the mask grinning inside.

As if I don't want the child to see it prematurely. But I'm afraid to open my sack. I'm afraid to look at the mask.

The child stares at the sack for a long time.

Inside my sack the mask is grinning.

I hear other voices in the house. I step quickly into the closet and pull the hanging clothes around me. With my old and well-traveled apparel I am indistinguishable from the other garments.

An empty sleeve jostles me. A cap and scarf suspend awkwardly over a wrinkled coat. Darkness stares at me from the eyeholes in a ski mask.

Inside my sack the mask is grinning.

The old man and old woman sit quietly with the boy. Or perhaps they are younger than they seem. Most of the people in the cities are younger than they seem. The dim fire leaves yellow shadows flying across their faces, like age mov-

ing in and out of their skin.

I wonder if I have ever had such a family. I think I should have had some sort of family, but I can't be sure.

Inside my sack the mask is grinning.

The parents retire early, leaving the boy to sit and stare out the window.

Inside my sack the mask is grinning.

The boy comes to me when I step out of the closet.

Inside my sack the mask is grinning.

The boy turns his face up to my own, reaches out his hand. And touches my paper sack.

He looks at me with dark eyes, pink lips in the pale, sheet-white face.

And again, I open the sack, and am afraid to look. I don't want to open it, to take out the mask, but the boy has forced my hand.

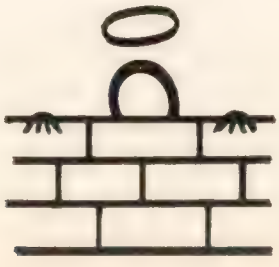
I raise the mask to cover my face. But I will not look at it . . . never will I look at it.

And the boy grins to match the mask's grin. And the boy turns paler; his skin grows dry.

And the light leaves his translucent skin as he closes his eyes.

I leave the house quietly, the mask once again safe inside my paper sack, the mask I've never seen, never seen. But I still know it is grinning, grinning.

Somewhere out in the city someone cries. Followed by another, then another, another still. ST



JOHN LUTZ

A successful, full-time writer, John Lutz is equally adept at producing novels, articles, or short stories—well over 100 having been published in numerous quality magazines, anthologies, and textbooks. There have also been several adaptations for radio mystery drama.

In HIGH STAKES, Mr. Lutz treats us to his special skill in creating nerve-shattering, white-knuckle tension—the kind that makes you almost afraid to turn the page, while realizing you can't help yourself from doing so.

HIGH STAKES

Ernie followed the bellhop into the crummy room at the Hayes Hotel, was shown the decrepit bathroom with its cracked porcelain, the black-and-white TV with its rolling picture. The bellhop, who was a teenager with a pimply complexion, smiled and waited. Ernie tipped him a dollar, which, considering that Ernie had no luggage other than the overnight bag he carried himself, seemed adequate. The bellhop sneered at him and left.

After the click of the door latch, there was thick silence in the room. Ernie sat on the edge of the bed, his ears gradually separating the faint sounds outside from the room's quietude—the thrumming rush of city traffic, a very distant siren or occasional honking horn, the metallic thumping and strumming of elevator cables from the bowels of the building. Someone dropped something heavy in the room upstairs. A maid pushed a linen cart with a squeaky wheel along the hall outside Ernie's door. Ernie bowed his head, cupped his face in his hands, and stared at the worn pale-blue carpet. Then he closed his eyes and sought the temporary anonymity of interior darkness.

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Ernie's luck was down. Almost as low as Ernie himself, who stood a shade over five-foot-four, even in his boots with the built-up heels. Usually a natty dresser, tonight he'd disgraced his slender frame with a cheap off-the-rack brown suit, a soiled white shirt, and a ridiculous red clip-on bow tie. He'd had to abandon his regular wardrobe at his previous hotel in lieu of settling the bill. Ernie had a face like a conniving ferret's, with watery pinkish eyes and a long, bent nose. His appearance wasn't at all deceptive. Ernie ferreted and connived.

He had spent most of his forty years in the starkly poor neighborhood of his birth; and if he wasn't the smartest guy around, he did possess a kind of gritty cunning that had enabled him to make his own erratic way in the world. And he had instinct, hunches, that led to backing the right horse sometimes, or playing the right card sometimes. Sometimes. He got by, anyway. Getting by was Ernie's game, and he just about broke even. He was not so much a winner as a survivor. There were people who resented even that.

One of those people was Carl Atwater. Ernie thought about Carl, opened his eyes, and stood up from the sagging bed. He got the half-pint of rye out of his overnight bag and went into the bathroom for the glass he'd seen on the basin. He tried not to think about Carl and the thousand dollars he owed Carl from that card game the last time he'd been here in his home town. He poured himself a drink, sat at the nicked and scarred plastic-topped desk, and glanced around again at the tiny room.

Even for Ernie this was a dump. He was used to better things; he didn't always slip into town on the sly and sign into a fleabag hotel. If he hadn't needed to see his sister Eunice to borrow some money—not the thousand he owed Carl, just a couple of hundred to see him down to Miami—he wouldn't be here now, contemplating on how he would bet on the roaches climbing the wall behind the bed if someone else were here to lay down some money on which one they thought would be first to reach the ceiling.

He smiled. What would Eunice think of him betting on cockroaches? She wouldn't be surprised; she'd told him for years that gambling was a sickness, and he had it bad. Maybe she was right, harping at him all the time to quit betting. But then she'd never hit the big one at Pimlico. She'd never turned up a corner of a hole card and seen a lovely third queen peeking out. She'd never ....

The hell with it. Ernie got two decks of cards from a suit coat pocket. He squinted at the decks, then slipped the marked one back into the pocket. Ernie always made it a point to carry a marked deck. A slickster in Reno had shown him how to doctor the cards so that only an expert could tell, and then only by looking closely. He broke the seal on the straight deck and dealt himself a hand of solitaire. He always played fair with himself. Two minutes after he'd switched on the desk lamp, tilting the yellowed shade to take the glare off the cards, he was lost in that intensity of concentration that only a devout gambler can achieve.

After losing three games in a row, he pushed the cards away and rubbed his tired eyes.

That was when someone knocked on the door.

Ernie sat paralyzed, not only by fear of Carl Atwater but by fear of what all gamblers regard as their enemy—the unexpected. The unexpected was what gave the dice a final unlikely tumble, what caused the favorite horse to stumble on the far turn, what filled inside straights for novice poker players. This time what the unexpected did was the worst it had ever done to Ernie; it delivered two very large business-like individuals to his hotel room. They had a key, and when their knock wasn't answered they had opened the door and walked right in.

They were big men, all right, but in the tiny room—and contrasted with Ernie's frailness—they appeared gigantic. The larger of the two, a lantern-jawed ex-pug type with a pushed-in nose and cold blue eyes, smiled down at Ernie. It wasn't the sort of smile that would melt hearts. His partner, a handsome dark-haired man with what looked like a knife scar down one cheek, stood wooden-faced. It was the smil-

ing man who spoke.

"I guess you know that Carl Atwater sent us," he said. He had a deep voice that suited his immensity.

Ernie swallowed a throatful of marbles. His heart ran wild. "But . . . how could anyone know I was here? I just checked in."

"Carl knows lots of desk clerks in hotels all over the city," the smiler said. "Soon as you checked in, we heard about it and Carl thought you rated a visit." He grinned wider and lazily cracked his knuckles. The sound in the small room was like a string of exploding firecrackers. "Don't dummy up on us, Ernie. You know what kind of visit this is."

Ernie stood up without thinking about it, knocking his chair over backward. "Hey, wait a minute! I mean, Carl and I are old buddies, and all I owe him is an even thousand bucks. I mean, you got the wrong guy! Check with Carl—just do me that favor!"

"It's precisely because you only owe a thousand dollars that we're here," the dark-haired one said. "Too many people owe Carl small sums, welshers like yourself. You're going to be an example for the rest of the petty four-flushers, Ernie. It will be a bad example. They won't want to follow it. They'll pay their debts instead, and that will add up to a lot of money."

"There ain't no good ways to die," the smiler said, "but some ways is worse than others."

Both men moved toward Ernie, slowly, as if wanting him to fully experience his dread. Ernie glanced at the door. Too far away. "Just check with Carl! Please!" he pleaded mindlessly, backpeddling on numbed legs. He was trembling. The bonecrushers kept advancing. The window was behind Ernie, but he was twelve stories above the street. The fleabag room wasn't air-conditioned, so the window was open about six inches. Corner a rat and watch it instinctively choose the less immediate danger. Ernie whirled and flung himself at the window. He snagged a fingernail in the faded lace curtain, felt the nail rip as he hurled the window all the way open. The smiler grunted and lunged at him, but

Ernie scampered outside onto the ledge with speed that amazed.

A gargantuan hand emerged from the open window. Ernie shuffled sideways to avoid it. He pressed his quaking body back against the brick wall and stared upward at the black night sky, the stiff summer breeze whipping at his unbuttoned suit coat.

The smiler stuck his huge head out the window. He studied the narrowness of the ledge on which Ernie was balanced, stared down at the street twelve stories below. He exposed a mouthful of crooked teeth and laughed a rolling, phlegmy rumble. The laugh was vibrant with emotion, but not humor.

"I told you some ways to die was worse than others," he said. "You're part worm, not part bird." He pulled his head back inside and shut the window. Ernie got a glimpse of sausage-sized fingers turning the lock.

Be calm, he told himself, be *calm!* He was trapped on the ledge, but his situation was much improved over what it had been a few minutes ago.

Then he really began to analyze his predicament. The concrete ledge he was poised on was only about six inches wide—not the place to go for a walk in his dress boots with their built-up slick leather heels. And just to his right, the ledge ended four feet away where the side of the building jutted out, and there were no other windows Ernie might be able to enter. To his left, beyond the locked window to his room, was a window to a room that did have an air conditioner. The old rusted unit extended from the window about three feet. Not only would that window be firmly fastened closed against the top of the unit, but there was no way to get around or over the bulky, sloping steel squareness of the air conditioner to reach the next window.

Ernie glanced upward. There was no escape in that direction, either.

Then he looked down.

Vertigo hit him with hammer force. Twelve stories seemed like twelve miles. He could see the tops of foreshortened

street lights, a few toylike cars turning at the intersection. His mind whirled, his head swam with terror. The ledge he was on seemed only a few inches wide and was barely visible, almost behind him, from his precarious point of view. His legs quivered weakly; his boots seemed to become detached from them, seemed to be stiff, awkward creatures with their own will that might betray him and send him plunging to his death. He could see so far—as if he were flying. Ernie clenched his eyes shut. He didn't let himself imagine what happened to flesh and bone when it met the pavement after a twelve-story drop.

He shoved himself backward against the security of the wall with what strength he had left, his hands at his sides, his fingernails clawing into the mortar. That rough brick wall was his mother and his lover and every high card he had ever held. It was all he had. He was hypocrite enough to pray.

But the terror seeped into his pores, into his brain and soul, became one with him. A thousand bucks, a lousy thousand bucks! He could have gone to a loan shark, could have stolen something and pawned it, could have begged. He could have ....

But he had to do something now. *Now!* He had to survive.

Not looking down, staring straight ahead with fear-bulged eyes, he chanced a hesitant, shuffling sideways step to his left, back toward his window. He dug his fingertips into the bricks as he moved, wishing the wall were soft so he could sink his fingers deep into it. Then he was assailed by an image of the wall coming apart like modeling clay in his hands, affording no support at all, sending him in a horrifying breathless arc into the night. He tried not to think about the wall, tried not to think about anything. This was a time for the primal raw judgment of fear.

Ernie made himself take another tentative step. Another. He winced each time his hard leather heels scraped loudly on the concrete. The material of his cheap suit kept snagging on the rough wall at his seat and shoulders, the backs of his legs. Once, the sole of his left boot slid on something

small and rounded—a pebble, perhaps—with a rollerlike action that almost caused him to fall. The panic that washed over him was a cold dark thing that he never wanted to feel again.

Finally, he was at the window. He contorted his body carefully, afraid that the night breeze might snatch it at any second, craned his neck till it hurt, and peered into his room.

It was empty. The bonecrushers had left. The threadbare furniture, the bed, the hard, worn carpet, had never looked so sweet. One of Ernie's hands curled around the window frame, came in contact with the smooth glass. He could see the tarnished brass latch at the top of the lower frame, firmly lodged in the locked position.

He struck at the window experimentally. The backward force of the blow separated him from the brick wall. Air shrieked into his lungs in a shrill gasp, and he straightened his body and slammed it backward, cracking his head on the wall, making him dizzy and nauseated. He stood frozen that way for a full minute.

Gradually, he became aware of a coolness on his cheeks—the high breeze drying his tears. He knew he couldn't strike the glass hard enough to break it without sending himself in an unbalanced lean out over the street to death waiting below.

Carl's bonecrushers were probably already having a beer somewhere, counting Ernie as dead. They were right. They were professionals who knew about such things, who recognized death when they saw it. Ernie's lower lip began to tremble. He wasn't an evil person; he'd never deliberately done anything to harm anyone. He didn't deserve this. *No one deserved this!*

He decided to scream. Maybe somebody—one of the other guests, a maid, the disdainful bellhop—would hear him.

"Help! Help!"

He almost laughed maniacally at the hopelessness of it. His choked screams were so feeble, lost on the wind, absorbed by the vast night. He could barely hear them himself.

As far back as he could remember, desperation had been

with him as a dull ache in the pit of his stomach, like an inflamed appendix threatening to burst. If it wasn't a friend, it was surely a close acquaintance. He should be able to deal with it if anyone could.

Yet he couldn't. Not this time. Maybe it inevitably had to come to this, to the swift screaming plunge that had so often awoken him from dark dreams. But tonight there would be no awakening, because he wasn't dreaming.

Ernie cursed himself and all his ancestry that had brought him to this point. He cursed his luck. But he would not let himself give up; his gameness was all he had. There was always, for the man with a feel for the angles, some sort of edge against the odds.

His pockets! What was in his pockets that he might use to break the window?

The first object he drew out was a greasy comb. He fumbled it, almost instinctively lunged for it as it slipped from his fingers and dropped. He started to bow his head to watch the comb fall, then remembered the last time he'd looked down. He again pressed the back of his head against the bricks. The world rocked crazily.

Here was his wallet. He withdrew it from his hip pocket carefully, squeezing it as if it were a bird that might try to take flight. He opened it, and his fingers groped through its contents. He explored the wallet entirely by feel, afraid to look down at it. A few bills, a credit card, a driver's license, a couple of old IOU's that he let flutter into the darkness. He kept the stiff plastic credit card and decided to drop the wallet deliberately. Maybe someone below would see it fall and look up and spot him. The odds were against it, he knew. This was a bad neighborhood; there were few people on the sidewalks. What would happen is that somebody would find the wallet, stick it in his pocket, and walk away. Ernie started to work the bills, a ten and two ones, out of the wallet, then decided it wasn't worth the effort and let the wallet drop. Money wouldn't help him where he was.

There was a slight crack between the upper and lower window frames. Ernie tried to insert the credit card, praying

that it would fit.

It did! A break! He'd gotten a break! Maybe it would be all he'd need!

He craned his neck sideways to watch as he slid the credit card along the frame and shoved it against the window latch. He could feel warmer air from the room rising from the crack and caressing his knuckles. He was so close, so close to being on the other side of that thin pane of glass and safe!

The latch moved slightly—he was sure of it! He pressed harder with the plastic card, feeling its edge dig into his fingers. He could feel or see no movement now. Desperately, he began to work the card back and forth. His hands were slick with perspiration.

The latch moved again!

Ernie almost shouted with joy. He would beat this! In a minute or five minutes the window would be unlocked and he would raise it and fall into the room and hug and kiss the worn carpet. He actually grinned as he manipulated his weakened fingers to get a firmer grip on the card.

And suddenly the card wasn't there. He gasped and snatched frantically, barely feeling the card's plastic corner as it slipped all the way through the crack into the room. He saw it slide to the bottom of the window pane, bounce off the inside wooden frame, and drop to the floor. From where he stood, he could see it lying on the carpet. Lying where it could no longer help him.

Ernie sobbed. His body began to tremble so violently that he thought it might shake itself off the ledge. He tried to calm himself when he realized that might actually happen. With more effort than he'd ever mustered for anything, he controlled himself and stood motionless.

He had to think, think, think! . . .

What else did he have in his pockets?

His room key!

He got it out and grasped it in the palm of his hand. It was affixed to no tag or chain, simply a brass key. He tried to fit it into the narrow crack between the upper and lower

window frames, but it was far wider than the credit card; he couldn't even insert the tip.

Then he got an idea. The putty holding the glass in its frame was old and chipped, dried hard from too many years and too many faded layers of paint.

Ernie began to chip at the putty with the tip of the key. Some of it came loose and crumbled, dropping to the ledge. He dug with the key again and more of the dried putty broke away from the frame. He would have to work all the way around the pane, and that would take time. It would take concentration. But Ernie would do it, because there was no other way off the ledge, because for the first time he realized how much he loved life. He flexed his knees slightly, his back still pressed to the hard bricks, and continued to chip away at the hardened putty.

After what seemed like an hour, a new problem developed. He'd worked more than halfway around the edges of the window pane when his legs began to cramp painfully. And his knees began trembling, not so much from fear now as from fatigue. Ernie stood up straight, tried to relax his calf muscles.

When he bent to begin work again, he found that within a few minutes the muscles cramped even more painfully. He straightened once more, felt the pain ease slightly. He would work this way, in short shifts, until the pain became unbearable and his trembling legs threatened to lose all strength and sensation. He would endure the pain because there was no other way. He didn't let himself consider what would happen if his legs gave out before he managed to chip away all the putty. Cautiously he flexed his knees, scooted lower against the wall, and began wielding the key with a frantic kind of economy of motion.

Finally, the putty was all chipped away, lying in triangular fragments on the ledge or on the sidewalk below.

Ernie ran his hand along the area where the glass met the wood frame. He felt a biting pain as the sharp edge of the glass sliced into his finger. He jerked the hand back, stared at his dark blood. The finger began to throb in quick rhythm

with his heart, a persistent reminder of mortality.

His problem now was that the pane wouldn't come out. It was slightly larger than the perimeter of the window frame opening, set in a groove in the wood, so it couldn't be pushed inward. It would have to be pulled out toward the street.

Ernie tried fitting the key between the wood and the glass so he could lever the top of the pane outward. The key was too wide.

He pressed his back against the bricks and began to cry again. His legs were rubbery; his entire body ached and was racked by occasional cramps and spasms. He was getting weaker, he knew; too weak to maintain his precarious perch on the narrow ledge. If only he still had the credit card, he thought, he would be able to pry the glass loose, let it fall to the sidewalk, and he could easily get back inside. But then if he'd held onto the card he might have been able to force the latch. The wind picked up, whipped at his clothes, threatened to fill his suit coat like a sail and pluck him from the ledge.

Then Ernie remembered. His suitcoat pocket! In the coat's inside pocket was his deck of marked cards! His edge against the odds!

He got the cards out, drew them from their box and let the box arc down and away in the breeze. He thumbed the top card from the deck and inserted it between the glass and the wooden frame. He gave it a slight twist and pulled. The glass seemed to move outward.

Then the card tore almost in half and lost all usefulness.

Ernie let it sail out into the night. He thumbed off the next card, bent it slightly so that if formed a subtle hook when he inserted it. This time the glass almost edged out of its frame before the card was torn. Ernie discarded that one and worked patiently, almost confidently. He had fifty more chances. The odds were with him now.

The tenth card, the king of diamonds, did the trick. The pane fell outward top first, scraped on the ledge, and then plummeted to shatter on the street below.

On uncontrollably shaking legs, Ernie took three shuffling sideways steps, gripped the window frame, and leaned backward in a stooped position, toward the room's interior.

Then he lost his grip.

His left leg shot out and his shoulder hit the wooden frame. Gravity on both sides of the window fought over him for a moment while his heart blocked the scream in his throat.

He fell into the room, bumping his head on the top of the window frame as he dropped, hitting the floor hard. A loud sob of relief escaped his lips as he continued his drop, whirling into unconsciousness.

He awoke terrified. Then he realized he was still lying on his back on the scratchy, worn carpet, on the motionless, firm floor of his hotel room, and the terror left him.

But only for a moment.

Staring down at him was Carl Atwater, flanked by his two bonecrushers.

Ernie started to get up, then fell back, supporting himself on his elbows. He searched the faces of the three men looming over him and was surprised to see a relaxed smile on Carl's shrewd features, deadpan indifference on those of his henchmen. "Look, about that thousand dollars . . . , " he said, trying to ride the feeble ray of sunshine in Carl's smile.

"Don't worry about that, Ernie, old buddy," Carl said. He bent forward, offering his hand.

Ernie gripped the strong, well-manicured hand, and Carl helped him to his feet. He was still weak, so he moved over to lean on the desk. The eyes of the three men followed him.

"You don't owe me the thousand anymore," Carl said.

Ernie was astounded. He knew Carl; they lived by the same unbreakable code. "You mean you're going to cancel the debt?"

"I never cancel a debt," Carl said in an icy voice. He crossed his arms, still smiling. "Let's say you worked it off. When we heard you checked in at the Hayes, we got right

down here. We were in the building across the street ten minutes after you were shown to this room."

"You mean the three of you? . . . "

"Four of us," Carl corrected.

That was when Ernie understood. The two bonecrushers were pros; they would never have allowed him to escape, even temporarily, out the window. They had let him get away, boxed him in so that there was no place to go but out onto the ledge. The whole thing had been a set-up. After locking the window, the two bonecrushers had gone across the street to join their boss. Ernie knew who the fourth man must be.

"You're off the hook," Carl told him, "because I bet a thousand dollars that you'd find a way off that ledge without getting killed." There was a sudden genuine flash of admiration in his smile, curiously mixed with contempt. "I had faith in you, Ernie, because I know you and guys like you. You're a survivor, no matter what. You're the rat that finds its way off the sinking ship. Or off a high ledge."

Ernie began to shake again, this time with rage. "You were watching me from across the street. The three of you and whoever you placed the bet with . . . . All the time I was out there you were watching, waiting to see if I'd fall."

"I never doubted you, Ernie," Carl told him.

Ernie's legs threatened to give out at last. He staggered a few steps and sat slumped on the edge of the mattress. He had come so close to dying; Carl had come so close to backing a loser. "I'll never place another bet," he mumbled. "Not on a horse, a football game, a roulette wheel, a political race . . . nothing! I'm cured, I swear it!"

Carl laughed. "I told you I know you, Ernie. Better than you think. I've heard guys like you talk that way hundreds of times. They always gamble again, because it's what keeps them alive. They have to believe that a turn of a card or a tumble of the dice or a flip of a coin might change things for them, because they can't stand things the way they are. You're like the rest of them, Ernie. I'll see you again sooner or later, and I'll see your money."

Carl walked toward the door. The bonecrusher with the knife scar was there ahead of him, holding the door open. Neither big man was paying the slightest attention to Ernie now. They were finished with him, and he was of no more importance than a piece of the room's worn-out furniture.

"Take care of yourself, Ernie," Carl said, and they went out.

Ernie sat for a long time staring at the floor. He remembered how it had been out on that ledge; it had changed him permanently, he was convinced. It had wised him up as nothing else could. Carl was wrong if he thought Ernie wasn't finished gambling. Ernie knew better. He was a new man and a better man. He wasn't all talk like those other guys. Carl was mistaken about him. Ernie was sure of it.

He would bet on it. ST

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STOOL PIGEON

As early as 1840, a spy in the pay of authorities was known as a *stool pigeon.* In view of its history, this expression is particularly apt.

Meat has always been highly prized by the British, pigeon being considered a particularly tempting delicacy. Since birds brought down by gunfire are frequently damaged, they are consequently less salable.

In past centuries, when pigeons were more numerous, many hunters made a livelihood by trapping them. It was discovered that the best method of luring a pigeon into a snare was by use of a decoy, a tame bird. Because trappers frequently spent the entire day in the fields, they carried with them small stools. While they sat waiting for game, it was customary to tie the decoy pigeon to the stool so it could not escape.

Such *stool pigeons* were very common. Since they lured their fellows into captivity, the name came to be applied to criminals who betrayed their own class.

Marvin Vanoni

LAW & DisorderR

Robert L. Snow

Policemen and other law enforcement officials are admittedly human—just like the rest of us. They're not always cool, calm, and collected—not always in complete control of the situation. This is obviously even more true for those people whose actions often bring them into conflict with America's finest.

The SAINT Magazine is pleased to present, herewith, a new continuing feature, LAW AND DISORDER—real-life accounts wherein some of the funny foibles of individuals on both sides of the law are aired for your enjoyment.

For our initial chuckle, we present this hilarious and well-written report by the OLD SALT who was there. Robert Snow, an Indianapolis police officer for fifteen years, has the dubious honor of being the first to admit he's less than perfect.

OLD SALT

The snow settled lightly onto the windshield of the navy blue police car—not enough to keep the wipers going constantly, but enough to be irritating, since I had to keep turning them on every thirty seconds or so. It was four in the morning, and the radio had been quiet for the last couple hours. My partner, Mike, blinked his eyes to fight off the sleep, while I, the old salt of the team (I had over two years in the Department—almost a year longer than him), maintained the ever-alert gaze of the veteran officer, knowing that if my eyelids ever touched, I wouldn't wake up until next Tuesday. The police radio finally crackled to life, bringing Mike out of his near-stupor.

"Attention all cars. We have a report of a burglary in progress

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at the Tarkington Bowling Lanes, 2103 North Tarkington."

Mike sat up and began looking around. "Isn't that pretty close to here?"

I nodded. "About two blocks. Hit Control and tell them we'll check it."

I flipped off the headlights and slipped up the street toward the bowling alley. A half-block from the address, I slid over into the curb lane and crept up as deftly as a cat stalking an unsuspecting mouse, my eyes watching for any activity. Not seeing anything from the direction we were approaching, I let the car roll to a stop, then snatched my Kel-lite off the seat. In the best command voice I could muster, I instructed Mike to check the west and north sides of the building while I checked the east and south.

A cold wind hit me like an unexpected splash of ice water as I stepped from the Ford LTD and clicked the switch on my flashlight, stopping in mid-step when I discovered that the batteries were dead. Not seeming to notice my oversight, Mike disappeared around the corner of the building, the beam of his light reflecting off the sooty brick walls.

I flipped the switch several more times before finally giving up and walking tentatively over to the east side of the bowling alley. A wave of relief washed over me when I saw the trackless snow leading into the unlit alley on my side of the building. Licking lips as dry as leather, I stepped into the gloom and began stealthily treading through the blackness of the narrow passageway, trying not to think of what would happen if a sewer was open or something. Fifty feet into the thick murkiness, I heard Mike yelling for me to come over to the other side. Spinning around, I sprinted out of the alley, falling several times in the slippery darkness.

Exasperation stretched the skin of my face when I found Mike standing alone next to a window of brick glass.

"Jeez," I said between breaths, "what the hell were you yelling about? I thought you were in trouble." I leaned down and slapped the snow off my knees.

"I thought they might try to get back out when they saw my light."

I looked up as he pointed to a jagged hole not quite a foot in diameter that'd been broken through the brick glass. A small sledge hammer lay in the snow beneath it. It was the first I'd noticed the hole, but I shrugged as though I'd already seen it, then peered uninterested into

the opening. I found I was looking into the kitchen, just above the stove. Directly in front of the hole, a pot still sat on the burner. I worked my face into a profound look and used my "sage to student" voice.

"They didn't get in," I said. "The hole's too small, and nothing's been moved. I think we got here a little too soon."

Mike chewed on his bottom lip a moment. "They might've been able to squeeze through there. Maybe they just moved the pot back to fool us."

I shook my head and walked back to the police car to get my notebook. "Car 23 to Control," I said into the mike of the police radio.

"Go ahead, Car 23," a dispatcher responded.

"Ma'am, is there anyone on the way to the Tarkington Bowling Lanes?"

"Sir, the owner's been notified, and he stated that he'd be there in approximately ten minutes."

Mike was still studying the hole when I returned. I cleared my throat, and he jumped back and began staring at his boots, seeming to find them fascinating. A few minutes later, a green Mercedes sedan pulled up to the front of the building.

"Wait here," I said. "You'd better watch the hole in case Rubber Man tries to get back out."

He smiled and nodded. I simply shook my head and muttered "rookies" as I walked over to meet the owner.

A balding, elderly man with Coke-bottle glasses stepped out of the Mercedes. "Do you think anyone's in there, Officer?" he asked, seeming to be trying to use the car door as a shield.

I shook my head. "Do you have a sound alarm?"

He nodded, his glasses slipping down on his nose.

"I think they must've set it off trying to break through your brick glass," I said. "The police car probably scared them off."

He pushed his glasses back up and nodded again, this time holding the spectacles on with his finger. The man looked up at the building, and after seeming to have to think about it for a moment, finally stepped out away from the car door, but stayed behind me on the way up to the entrance. He fumbled a few seconds with his key chain looking for the right key, then at last found it and unlocked and pulled the door open, stepping back out of the way.

I hid my flashlight behind my leg and looked into the maw-like opening, able to see only a few inches beyond the door. "Uh, where's the lightswitch?" I asked.

"Just to the right, inside the

door."

I licked leathery lips again and stepped into the grave-still blackness, cussing under my breath when nothing happened as I flipped the lightswitch.

"It doesn't work," I said over my shoulder.

"Those stupid cleaning people must've turned it off at the circuit box again. It's about fifty feet down on the same wall. Don't you have a flashlight?"

"Uh, yeah," I said, my eyes trying to penetrate the inky blackness, but unable to see past my eyelashes. I hesitated a few seconds and took several deep breaths, then, like a blind man's white cane, began waving my flashlight in front of me, feeling my way along the wall. After about twenty-five feet, I stopped and looked behind me. A cold shiver rippled out my fingertips when I found that the door had disappeared into the gloom. Suddenly, the darkness seemed to squeeze in around me, forcing the air from my lungs.

Electricity racing along my skin, I half heartedly convinced myself there was nothing to be frightened of and began the slow probing again into the interior, knowing what it must feel like to be swallowed by a whale. Finally, my fingers felt the cold steel of the circuit box cover. It moved slightly under my touch, and I stepped around and reached inside, flipping on the switches.

Instantly, the building became flooded with fluorescent lighting. An inch or so from my face, so close I could see his nostril hair fluttering under the rush of a suddenly expelled breath, was the face of another man.

I screamed and leaped back several feet, and at the same instant realized I was holding the flashlight in my gun hand. With a palsied arm, I dropped the light and tried to pull my revolver, my fingers seeming to fumble endlessly with the strap.

Mike charged through the door just in time to see me holding the burglar at gun point. He looked at me with an expression of wonder. "You were just putting me on, weren't you? You knew he was in here all along. Boy, you must've scared the hell out of him the way he screamed." Mike stood shaking his head, while I just stood shaking. "You old salts are really something," he said. "I'll never figure out how you guys know these things."

I nodded and grinned sheepishly, wondering how I was going to change my underwear without Mike knowing it. ST

As Crime Goes By...

John Ball

Each year there is a new crop of beauties to compete in such pageants as Miss America, Miss World, and Miss Universe, and each year there is a fresh influx of readers, young and old, to discover the fascinating world of the mystery story. It's a diverse world of criminals, policemen, damsels in gothic distress, private eyes, gifted amateur detectives, spies, and almost every kind of people God has seen fit to put on the earth, including some notable ones with four feet.

These new readers always have the same question: now that I've discovered ... (supply your own favorite) ... who else is good? As a very young man, I tried for months to find another mystery writer who wrote the same kind of fascinating puzzles involving locked rooms as John Dickson Carr. There wasn't one, unless you count Carter Dickson, who was Carr under another name. But there are plenty of excellent mystery writers, many of whom you might have missed. Here are some recommendations:

Charles Merrill Smith, who writes about Reverend Randollph, the former pro quarterback who is the very up-to-date temporary pastor of a wealthy, high society church in Chicago's loop. You'll meet his engaging girl friend, a very good homicide cop, and Freddie the bishop, who is a delight. The first in this series, and the place to start, is *Reverend Randollph and the Wages of Sin.* There are four more in the series so far; the titles all begin "Reverend Randollph and ...." Putnam is the publisher.

Tony Hillerman writes about murder among the Indians of the Southwest. His knowledge of their culture and customs is remarkable, and he is a very good storyteller in the bargain. To start out, try *The Dance Hall of the Dead;* it won the Edgar for the best mystery novel of the year. It will introduce you to Joe Leaphorn, the Navaho detective, and to the police force of that proud nation. Harper and Row.

Next in line is Colin Watson, with his engaging and witty tales of Flaxborough and Inspector Purbright. Murder comes often to this British village, but always in some of the most delightfully funny and remarkable circumstances. The author also

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has a penetrating eye for human character and frailties; his account of the medieval banquet served to busloads of visiting tourists is memorable. Try *Kissing Covens* for a starter. Or *Six Nuns and a Shotgun*, which starts off with a telegram proclaiming TWO NAKED NUNS AVAILABLE PHILADELPHIA. If you want to know more, read the book and have yourself a delightful time. Putnam.

If the private eye is your special favorite in the genre, then don't miss Jonathan Valin's books about Harry Stoner, a Cincinnati detective. There are many authors in this ripe field, but Valin, a relative newcomer, is outstanding. *The Lime Pit* will start you off in fine style. Inevitably, Hammett, Chandler, and MacDonald come to mind in this field; Mr. Valin is rapidly earning himself a place in their select company. Dodd Mead and Company publishes his work.

If, like everyone else, you bitterly regret that Dr. Watson and others gave us only 60 stories about Sherlock Holmes, you can find consolation in *The Solar Pons Omnibus*, which is published by Arkham House. Here are all of the adventures of the Master's notable alter ego, tales that have won high praise for many years. The author is August Derleth, who was the most worthy and distinguished follower in Dr. Watson's footsteps. If we cannot have more of Holmes himself, then his almost equally gifted understudy is fortunately ready to carry on. The complete set is beautifully produced and boxed. It costs $40.00 and is worth every cent. Arkham House, Sauk City, Wisconsin 53583.

Every now and then a mystery reader appears who has somehow missed Arthur Upfield. He was an Australian swagman with an intimate knowledge of the Great Outback and the hardy people who inhabit it. His Inspector Napolean Bonaparte, a half white, half aborigine detective, is a giant in the literature. Upfield books are hard to find, but they are, happily, being reprinted. Three exceptionally good ones are *The New Shoe, Murder Down Under*, and *Journey to the Hangman*. Upfield painted a genuinely fascinating and completely authentic picture of Australia—so good that he is required reading in the anthropology departments of many American universities.

Which brings us to the British novelist Ellis Peters and her delightful medieval monk/detective, Brother Cadfael. Formerly a man of the world, the Brother has taken up the religious life and dedicated himself to his

herb garden, where he produces remedies (the most popular of which is poppy syrup). He appears first in *A Morbid Taste for Bones*, which is a delightful and engaging mystery. Brother Cadfael's superiors are distressed by the fact that their abbey has no saint in post mortem residence, so they decide to go to Ireland, where an obscure one is buried, and dig him up. The Irish do not take kindly to this and the fun begins. Also present is a realistic, fire breathing, dazzling heroine who could make any man regret he was born in a different century. Morrow is the publisher.

If your taste, and your budget, runs to paperback editions, there are some good things going there, too. Individual titles are profuse, but you can find good reading at reasonable prices in two notable new series of reprints. One of them is the *Walker British Mystery* collection. These attractive little books are well designed with uniform covers in maroon that make them easy to spot. Some of the authors represented are Pierre Audemars, J. G. Jeffries, Desmond Cory, Jeffrey Ashford, Josephine Bell, and John Creasey. So far, the series appears to be limited to the authors that Walker regularly publishes in hardback, but this may change.

A broader based series, and an excellent one, is the *Perennial Library* put out by Harper and Row. Some of the titles are of classic works; others are recent and notably good. The cover designs vary in this series, and there are no uniform backstraps, but they can be easily spotted. This library is already quite extensive and is growing with new titles every month. Its value lies in the fact that almost any Perennial title is a guarantee of good entertainment. If you want a suggestion, try Frank Parrish's books about Dan Mallett, the sometimes handyman, thief, poacher, general-all-around scoundrel and con man, who lives in rural England and does it all for his mother who is old and ailing. Some titles are *Sting of the Honeybee*, *Fire in the Barkey*, and *Snare in the Dark*. Dan is unique and rare entertainment.

Another winner in this series is *Roast Eggs* by Douglas Clark. The trial of a man accused of murder is nearing its end. The defense is very strong and an acquittal seems inevitable. Then, two top Scotland Yard detectives are called in. With nothing to go on but the trial transcript, they employ some remarkable deductive reasoning to find another, and startling, conclusion. If you like pure deduction, don't miss this one! ST

COMING . . . NEXT ISSUE!

LESLIE CHARTERIS — Since everyone had an alibi, it seemed to The Saint that only the victim had been nailed . . .

RICHARD DEMING — Justice will be served, despite the law . . .

JOE L. HENSLEY — Cannert's search for his wife continues, with some food for thought . . .

FRANCIS M. NEVINS, JR. — Breaking new legal ground can sometimes put you in it . . .

J. F. PEIRCE — Just what she always wanted for her birthday — a silencer . . .

CHARLES PETERSON — Mix one cat burglar with an honest cop, add an eccentric with a Ouija board, and stir . . .

JACK RITCHIE — Ghosts can be whatever you want them to be — and sometimes what you don't want them to be . . .

STEVE RASNIC TEM — And a little child shall . . .

SHAUN USHER — Nothing is ever exactly what it seems . . .

BETTY REN WRIGHT — She kept her demon in a glass jar . . .

PLUS:

TRUE CRIME
LAW & DISORDER
AND MORE . . .

THE SAINT ON THE AIR

by Paul Bishop

Footsteps echo mysteriously on a lonely street over the forlorn strains of a haunting tune. The voice of an announcer is heard: "The adventures of The Saint, starring Vincent Price." The voice continues on to explain that The Saint is based on characters created by Leslie Charteris and that this Robin Hood of modern crime—known to millions from books, magazines, and the movies—has now come to radio with Hollywood's brilliant actor, Vincent Price, in the title role.

This was the opening of the final format of The Saint radio show, which began as a CBS summer offering in 1947, then returned for a regular run in July of 1949 on the Mutual network before moving to NBC as a Sunday sustainer in 1950.

The Saint on radio, though, dates back to January 6th, 1945, when NBC presented Edgar Barrier as Simon Templar, The Saint. The show's thirty minutes were devoted to the adventures of that modern rogue with the tarnished halo. Each week, audiences thrilled to The Saint's exploits as he helped all manner of people remain one step ahead of both the law and the crooks—battling either group with equal aplomb.

The show quickly became known for its wry sense of humor as The Saint, aided by Hoppy, his house boy, zinged out one-liners that rivaled the best of radio's harder-boiled sleuths such as Sam Spade, Philip Marlowe, and Richard Diamond.

In June of 1945, The Saint moved from NBC to CBS—Brian Aherne replacing Barrier as Templar, and Bromo Seltzer replacing the Ford Motor Company as sponsor. Aherne was a noted screen star making his first appearance as a radio regular. Backed by Louise Arthur as The Saint's girlfriend, Patricia Holmes, Aherne seemed right at home. Leslie Charteris subsequently confided to radio historian Jim Harmon that he felt of all the radio Saints, Aherne was the best.

Although, to many people, Aherne may have been "the best" in interpreting The Saint on radio, the best remembered is undoubtedly Vincent Price. Under the sponsorship of Ford Motors and Quaker Oats, Price

© 1984 by Paul Bishop

threw out sarcastic barbs with just the right devil-may-care attitude so often associated with The Saint. Due to his influence, The Saint became a patron of the arts and began to emphasize the enjoyment of fine wines and restaurants. A trademark of Price's character interpretation was that he hated to be disturbed during a meal. Invariably he was—the interruptions always leading him off to another adventure.

Supporting Barrier, Aherne, Price, and two other actors (Tim Conway and Barry Sullivan, who portrayed The Saint in some less memorable episodes during the middle years of the show's run on radio) were Ken Christy as Hoppy, John Brown and Theodore von Eltz as Inspector Fernak, and the aforementioned Louise Arthur as Pat Holmes. The show's announcers included Don Stanley, Harold Ross, Carlton KaDell, and Dick Joy. The musical scoring and conducting came via Louis Adrian and Harry Zimmerman.

In 1951, *The Adventures of the Saint* radio show left the airwaves—another fatality of the public's growing infatuation with the one-eyed beast known as television. But while the art of radio storytelling was faltering, the popularity of The Saint's adventures was as high as ever. It would not be long before Simon Templar's stick-figure calling card would be emblazoned across the millions of screens of this new visual medium. ST

CRIME SCENE

LOCATION: JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI
CRIME: EMBEZZLEMENT / HOMICIDE (?)
SUBJECT: ED CATES
CASE OFFICER: BOB BAILEY, DEPUTY SHERIFF
REPORTER: A. E. MAXWELL

With this first issue, the new SAINT Magazine is inaugurating a series of articles dealing with real crimes and real criminals. Frequently, the person relating the facts in one of these fascinating cases will be a law enforcement officer actually involved in the investigation. Alternately, the narrator may be someone other than a professional "cop"— someone like A. E. Maxwell, the author of our first entry in this series.

Mr. Maxwell is not only a successful novelist, but a specialist in nonfiction as well—as evidenced by his expert crime coverage for the Los Angeles Times. *The SAINT Magazine is fortunate in having obtained the services of a thoroughly professional investigative writer for the first assignment on the Crime Scene.*

THE MAN IN ED CATES' GRAVE

by A. E. Maxwell

The casket was closed for Ed Cates' funeral. After all, this was as close to a state funeral as Jackson, Mississippi, had seen in a while; none of the assembled dignitaries had any desire to gaze upon the blackened remains of a man who had died in a blazing car. Nobody needed to see what lay inside that mahogany casket.

But they couldn't help thinking about it.

Good old Ed. Poor old Ed. Respected lawyer. Army Reserve officer in line for his first star. Presbyterian deacon. Father and family man. City commissioner and candidate for mayor. Old Ed deserved a better death than this, even if he had changed a bit in the past couple of years.

© 1984 by A. E. Maxwell

Sure, he owed people a little money here and there. Sure, he wore his Army Reserve jumpsuit into the courtroom once in a while. Sure, he was a bit intense for some of the folks in the power structure. But Ed was also a card-carrying member of the Mississippi elite. A man like that shouldn't burn to death in a beat-up old 1973 Honda on a lonely road in Madison County, a mile and a half from anybody important.

The public display of mourning that Tuesday last May went right to the heart of the community of Jackson. Everybody who was anybody turned out for the services at First Presbyterian and then for graveside mourning at Lakeside Memorial Park. City flags were flown at half-staff. The governor sent flowers and condolences. A color guard fired off a measured salute for the departed bird colonel.

There was even some muted but angry muttering through the crowd of prominent mourners, complaints about the extra indignity that had been heaped on poor Dot Cates' head by that yokel sheriff, Billy Noble, and his upstart deputy, Bob Bailey, out in Madison County.

Who in hell does this Bailey think he is, anyway, withholding a death certificate for old Ed Cates? Bailey almost held up the funeral, for Christ's sake. Scuse my French, ma'am. But Bailey is trying to interfere with the natural order of things by besmirching the honor of a good and decent man.

And Bailey sure as hell is depriving Dot Cates of the insurance money she desperately needs.

Bob Bailey didn't go to Ed Cates' funeral for a couple of reasons. First, Bailey wasn't really one of the elite; he would have been out of place. Then, of course, there was the matter of the stink he had already created by holding up the death certification.

But the real reason Bob Bailey didn't attend Ed Cates' funeral was that he was too busy trying to prove that the man in the mahogany box was not Ed Cates.

I

The small car was burning so fiercely that it all but blocked Bozeman Road, the little country two-lane that cuts north from the interstate across the farm and ranch land north of Jackson. The passing motorist, a local woman headed home three-quarters of an hour after dark, was so frightened by the violent fire that she dared not pass by on the road. Instead, she backed up for almost a mile to one of the two homes

on Bozeman and borrowed a phone to call the Madison County Volunteer Fire Department.

The volunteers arrived a few minutes after 9 p.m. The flames were still roaring out of the broken windows of the Honda. Even before they got the pumper going, the firemen could see a human form sitting upright in the driver's seat. The man was long past help. The volunteer chief asked the dispatcher in Canton to notify the State Patrol and the Sheriff's Office. Deputy Sheriff Bob Bailey arrived at 9:15, a few minutes before the first state trooper.

Bob Bailey was a 40-year-old man who hadn't expected to be a cop. He had been raised in Jackson, gone to Ole' Miss, and moved to Ridgeland, just across the Madison County line from Jackson to start a landscaping business. He signed up as a reserve deputy on the Madison County sheriff's department for diversion, as much as anything. His brief formal training had been administered by Billy Noble, Madison County sheriff for the last 30 years.

In 1978, a bad year for lots of businessmen, Bailey's landscaping business went belly-up. He became a full-time deputy because he needed a job and because he had found he got a kick out of police work, even the ragged hours and nasty details that fall to a resident deputy in a five-man department—like having your Saturday night interrupted so you can go out and shovel the cinders that once had been a human being out of a burned-out car.

Besides, this one wasn't so bad, Bailey thought as he watched while the firemen quelled the last of the flames in the wreckage. That thing behind the wheel didn't look a hell of a lot like a human being. It certainly bore little resemblance to Ed Cates, who the computer in the Mississippi Department of Motor Vehicles said owned the car.

"Damn. Poor sucker just burned up in his car. Hard way to go," one of the volunteers remarked.

Bailey nodded agreement. It was indeed an awful accident, an awful way to die. But there was nothing to be done for it now. Hell, with luck, Bailey might even be back home and in bed before midnight. Another nasty job, but somebody had to take care of it, and that's what the county paid him the magnificent sum of $1,800 a month to do.

It was almost an hour before the hulk of the car had cooled enough that Bailey could approach it. The smell was heavy, death and gasoline mixed with burning rubber. A lot more gaso-

line and rubber than you would expect from such a small car. Bailey approached the window on the driver's side of the car. The smells clung to Bailey, clogging his nose and mouth. He saw the remnants of tires behind the driver. Odd. Cates must have been transporting an extra set of tires in the back seat. But why was the smell of gasoline so strong, here in the passenger compartment? Even if the gas tank had exploded, the interior of the car wouldn't have been saturated with raw gas.

Bailey inspected the rest of the car with his flashlight, noting some damage to the rear end of the Honda, as though it had been involved in a crash. At first, he thought of the Pinto, the little car that was costing the Ford Motor Company millions of dollars in liability claims because the Pinto tended to burst into flames in rear-end collisions. But there was no sign of another car, no broken headlight or torn metal that might explain what had caused the car to burn on the shoulder of Bozeman Road. No other car. Raw gas smell. Tires in the back seat.

What in hell is going on here? thought Bailey. *Had that "poor sucker just burned up in his car"? And if so, why and how?*

Bailey had finished his cursory examination of the burned car when Sheriff Billy Noble arrived. Noble, sheriff of Madison County since the Korean War, was no stranger to sudden and violent death. He handled more than a dozen homicides a year, high for a county of only 50,000. True, most of them were the drinking-and-domestic-strife kinds of homicides that come from the black and poor-white neighborhoods of Canton and Madison, the kind of homicides where the murderer calls the police to report the crime.

But the corpses were just as dead all the same.

"What you got, Bob?" asked Noble, not even getting out of his car.

"Car fire, Sheriff. Somebody burned up in it."

"Well, who was it?"

"Don't know, Sheriff," said Bailey. "It's supposed to be Ed Cates, the politician from Jackson. But there isn't enough left of the body to know whether it's man or woman, black or white. I just can't tell, and there are some things about this that just don't seem right."

Bailey paused. There were some heavy implications to what he was saying. Cates was a powerful man in Jackson, therefore in the state.

"How do you want to handle it, Sheriff?"

Noble studied the burned car,

smoke still eddying from burning plastic foam upholstery.

"Do your job, Bob," said Noble. "Just do your job. I'll take care of any flap."

Bailey went to work.

First there was the unpleasant task of informing the next-of-kin, or the putative next-of-kin. Dorothy Cates was home when Bailey and a Highway Patrol officer knocked on the front door. Understandably, Mrs. Cates was confused by the questions that Bailey was asking her. Did her husband still own the Honda? Was he driving it tonight? Then came the shocking news of death. And more questions. Was your husband alone? Why would he have been out there on Bozeman Road?

No coherent answers were forthcoming. In the end, there was little Bailey could do but back out the door, apologizing.

Sunday morning was a bit different. The deputy returned to the accident scene and studied it again. Then he reexamined the wrecked car, alert for any evidence that he might have overlooked by flashlight.

The Highway Patrol was out, too. One of the troopers found a shoe in the ashes. He showed it to Mrs. Cates, who tearfully identified the shoe as her husband's; likewise the remnants of a leather briefcase. On the strength of that, the Highway Patrol announced to the press that the body in the car was indeed Ed Cates. The accident had taken place too late to make the Sunday morning papers, but the story now led the paper and the local television news.

Bailey was still not convinced, but there was little he could do at the time. The Highway Patrol had concurrent jurisdiction. As a Madison County deputy, Bailey had no control over what conclusions the Highway Patrol reached.

Mrs. Cates was a bit more help the second time Bailey talked to her. She mentioned an accident involving the Honda several weeks earlier. Ed had told her that the car had developed a gas leak as a result of the collision. It was another little piece of evidence in favor of the theory that the fire was an unfortunate accident. Bailey was even able to track down the service station where the Honda had been repaired after the accident. The gas leak had, in fact, existed.

Bailey went back over the burned-out car again. Sure, the shoe and briefcase had been there, but what about other things that should have survived the flames? What about Army dog tags? Everybody who knew Ed Cates knew he still wore his tags. Those things

were designed to withstand the kinds of violent deaths that came in war. Surely the tags would have survived a car fire.

So where were they? Not on the body. Not in the car.

At the end of the first day of investigation, Bob Bailey was no closer to answers than he had been the night of the fire. If anything, there were more ambiguities, more unanswered questions. At this point, the death could be suicide, homicide or accident.

Bob Bailey spent a restless Sunday night. Monday would be worse.

II

The first interview Bob Bailey had on Monday was with the secretary who oversaw the operation of Ed Cates' law office in downtown Jackson. But on his way to the appointment, Bailey stopped by the Jackson Police Department to pay a courtesy call. In Mississippi, as in most other places, law enforcement agencies don't go barging around in other jurisdictions, particularly when the investigation involves a prominent citizen.

Bailey immediately sought out Sgt. Bob Campbell. He and Campbell had worked together on several previous cases; they understood and trusted each other. In addition, Campbell was in charge of the Jackson intelligence detail. He had street contacts and, like most intelligence cops, worked directly for the police chief. If anybody would have picked up something about Ed Cates, it would be Campbell.

Campbell signed on to Bailey's investigation immediately, on the strength of nothing more than Bailey's suspicions. The two detectives sat down with Cates' secretary before noon. Immediately, the case began to open up again. The secretary, who had been with Cates for 10 years, said she had the feeling that something strange had happened to her boss in recent months. He had taken over the paperwork for his lawyer's trust account, a job she had always handled for him. He had become, well, secretive. He had made some unusual trips.

She said Cates' practice was sound financially. In fact, Cates had recently been able to collect a sizeable-sum legal settlement. He had begun spending large amounts of cash. She recalled the name of the case which had yielded the settlement.

Then the deputy looked around Cates' personal office. In plain sight, he found more evidence of unusual behavior—records of the purchase of five Cadillac automobiles for $90,000

and then their quick resale for $65,000, a transaction that had resulted in a net loss but which had yielded that handy commodity, cash. It was a strange transaction, almost as though Ed Cates was trying to launder funds, to hide their source. The alarm bells were getting louder in Bailey's head.

Monday afternoon, Bailey checked the court files and found that Ed Cates had indeed won a major settlement several months before. But the court had awarded him only $18,000 in fees, hardly enough to explain the money he had spent on Cadillacs. By late afternoon, after discussing his findings with Noble and Campbell, Bailey took the step any prudent investigator would have taken—he looked for the money. Securing a court order, he went to the First National Bank of Jackson and obtained a copy of Cates' banking records.

Bingo.

In the bank records, Bailey found the evidence that convinced him the car fire had not been an accident. It appeared that Ed Cates had looted his own trust account—money he was supposed to be holding on behalf of his clients—to the tune of $223,000. There was, in the embezzlement, ample motive for homicide—Ed Cates' or someone made to appear to be Ed Cates. There was even ample motive for suicide, particularly since the crime was almost sure to be discovered quickly. But there was damned little reason to continue to act as though whatever happened out on Bozeman Road was an accident.

It was after dark Monday when Bailey got back to Canton and sat down with Sheriff Noble and with the Madison County medical examiner, Harry Bowen, to discuss the case. Bowen had already gotten a call from the Cates' family lawyer, inquiring about a death certificate. The case was approaching its first critical juncture.

"Harry," Bailey said, "there's too much I can't explain for me to be happy putting that man in the ground as Ed Cates."

Bowen, a county pathologist with a reputation for thoroughness, pondered the matter for a moment. "Well, do you want to hold up the funeral? It's scheduled for tomorrow. Lots of big shots will be there."

"Do they have to have a death certificate, with a formal cause of death, to have a funeral?" asked Bailey.

Bowen shook his head.

"Hell, have the funeral. The man in the box sure as hell won't care," said Bailey. "If everyone wants to think it's Cates, I can't stop them. Not right now,

anyway."

So the funeral was held, and the burned body was buried in Ed Cates' grave. Bailey didn't attend, but Sgt. Bob Campbell did, blending into the crowd of mourners like a good intelligence cop, unobtrusive and observant. Nothing unexpected happened. Lots of Jackson's finest folks, Mississippi's elite, said nice things and murmured "Ain't it a shame" that afternoon. But the eulogies spoken that afternoon would come back to haunt folks later.

With the funeral over, the immediate pressure was off Bailey and Campbell, who were both working full time on the case now. Publicly, the case began to fade from attention, but privately, dozens of people began to come forward with bits and pieces of evidence that cast doubt on the death of Ed Cates.

For instance, it quickly became clear that Ed Cates was in deep financial trouble. He owed thousands of dollars to family members and friends. He was months behind in his office rent, and the bank was about to foreclose on his house.

Then there were the other signs of unraveling in Ed Cates' well-ordered life. A check with the Army Reserve revealed that he had resigned two years before, after being passed over twice for command of his judge-advocate corps unit; this despite the fact that he had told friends he was still in the Reserve and was, in fact, now a commissioned general.

Then there was the matter of insurance. The deputy and the intelligence cop found that five months before, Ed Cates had purchased more than $600,000 in life insurance. The policies all had suicide exclusions in them. That, by itself, would seem to argue against the conclusion that Cates had killed himself.

But who was the victim? Was it Cates, done in by someone else? Or was it some anonymous stranger killed by the Presbyterian deacon and community leader to cover his own sordid thefts and lies?

Either way, it was murder.

The investigators spent most of the next two weeks pulling on the threads of Ed Cates' life, proving up their embezzlement case and checking missing-persons reports from the immediate region. They turned up some further pieces of evidence: A Jackson police patrol officer recalled seeing a car like the burned Honda parked next to a new Datsun in a downtown parking structure. For some reason, he had noticed a travel bag in the Honda. Then, some time afterward, the patrol officer had noticed the same

bag, now in the new Datsun.

And there was the matter of the gas. A clerk at a convenience store close to Interstate 55 now recalled selling two cans of gasoline to a man matching Ed Cates' description not long before the fire. That information might have shocked the elite of Jackson, but it didn't surprise Bailey and Campbell.

Finally, on May 26, more than two weeks after the funeral, the newly widowed Dot Cates finally consented to give the officers an interview and to let them inspect her late husband's effects. Mrs. Cates was little help herself; Bailey had the distinct feeling she genuinely believed her husband was dead.

The search of Ed Cates' personal effects must have made Dot Cates very uneasy. Several things the investigators were looking for could not be located. Cates' military records, his summer fatigues and two personal weapons—a .45-cal. officer's sidearm and a .41-cal. revolver—were missing. No trace of them had been found in the Honda. Dot Cates knew her husband would never have lost or misplaced those things; he valued them too much.

Bailey walked away with more questions than before.

III

On the morning of June 8, Bob Bailey thought he was finally going to find out one thing: Was Ed Cates the man in the grave? A private investigator, hired by one of the insurance companies which stood to lose $600,000, had obtained X-rays of Cates taken several years earlier. The X-rays showed that Cates had an unusual bone formation in his left foot. If the body in the grave lacked that anatomical peculiarity, it could not be Ed Cates.

Shortly before 10 that same morning, Bailey got another phone call, this one from Donald B. Morrison, an attorney who had been retained by Dot Cates to handle her husband's affairs. Morrison had been cooperative with Bailey in the investigation; the lawyer was also pushing for a death certificate. Bailey was not sure he wanted to take the call, but finally he picked up the phone.

"Can you come over?" asked Morrison. "I have something you'll have to look at."

Bailey and Campbell met with the attorney, who showed them two pieces of paper.

The first document was a wire that read: "Just heard of Chic's tragedy. Am very sorry, as he was the best. Am wiring money and mailing letter. Please take no steps legally or otherwise until you receive the letter. With deepest sympathy,

Christopher E. Curts."

The other document was a $4,000 money order which had been purchased on behalf of Mrs. Cates by the same Christopher Curts, a man Mrs. Cates swore she had never heard of.

Morrison had received the wire and money order from Mrs. Cates several days before and had gone to the trouble of tracing them before calling Bailey. They had been sent from Lawrenceville, Georgia.

Bailey studied the address for a minute. Then he lit up with a grin. "Looks like I'm going to Georgia," he said to Campbell. The deputy was so excited he even forgot to call Sheriff Noble to ask for permission to make the trip until he got to Georgia.

It was dark by the time Bailey reached Lawrenceville, an Atlanta suburb. A local police detective, rung into the case by phone, had checked out the address. It was an apartment. He had spotted indications the place was occupied, but had stayed back, waiting for Bailey.

Several hours before dawn, Bailey crept forward into the carport area beside the apartment. Risking one brief flare from his flashlight, Bailey illuminated the license plate of the car parked there. It was a Datsun. It still bore the temporary Louisiana license plate that the Jackson patrol officer had noted more than four weeks before in the downtown parking structure, when the car had been parked beside the 1973 Honda in which Ed Cates was supposed to have died.

After dawn, Bob Bailey drew his .38-cal. service revolver, approached the apartment, and knocked loudly.

"Who is it?" a man inside asked.

"The police," announced Bailey. "Open the door and open it now."

The door opened a crack. Bailey threw his shoulder into it. Then he stood face-to-face with the still-sleepy occupant, dressed in striped pajamas.

"Good morning, Mr. Cates," said Bailey.

Ed Cates said nothing. There was nothing he could say.

IV

Cates soon regained his tongue; he was a lawyer, after all. He used all the delaying tactics the law permits. He required Bailey to get a search warrant for the apartment, which meant hours of waiting until the warrant could be obtained. It was worth the wait. A search turned up Cates' military records, the missing .45 and .41 pistols, and $28,000 in cash.

A few days later, Cates came home to Mississippi. But he no

longer is one of the leading citizens of Jackson. Instead, he resides in the Madison County Jail in Canton, waiting for the court to act in his case. In the only interview he has given, to a reporter for the Los Angeles Times, Cates maintained that he has an explanation for his actions. That was all Cates said. Whatever his defense might be, he's saving it for court.

It now appears that Cates spent his entire four weeks as a dead man in the barren little apartment in Georgia, supplementing the embezzled cash with work selling vacuum cleaners. In four weeks, he hadn't made enough money to buy more than a bedroom set for his apartment.

It must have been a grim little life.

But not as grim as the remains in Ed Cates' grave.

EPILOGUE

Nine months after fire destroyed the Honda, the human remains in the car were still unidentified. Bob Bailey had run to ground his last lead—a laundry tag in the pants the dead man wore—but that was no help. The pants had been part of a uniform issued by a company that went out of existence in 1977. For months, Bailey tracked the man to whom the pants had been issued. He finally located him at his new job in a nuclear power plant in New Hampshire. The man had no idea who might have been wearing his pants. All he did know was that he was not the man who had burned up in Ed Cates' car.

That false trail exhausted Bob Bailey's inventiveness. "We haven't given up, but we got no more leads. We may never know who that poor devil was," Bailey says. "Personally, I'm convinced he was from New Orleans, maybe an illegal immigrant who jumped ship down there. In that case, we'll probably never identify him."

Unless Ed Cates decides to talk, something he has not chosen to do, up to now.

"So far, Mr. Cates has refused to give us anything except his name, rank and serial number," said Bailey. "He's still that same vain, arrogant s.o.b. who thought he could do no wrong.

"That's fine with me, because we're going to convict him."

And maybe then, after all the legal loopholes have been closed, maybe then Ed Cates will tell us who really is buried in Ed Cates' grave. ST

These are the circumstances in this ongoing case as of February, 1984. – Ed.

DETECTIVE FICTION QUIZ

by Harry Squires

You are undoubtedly familiar with these well-known detective fiction characters and their creators. See if you can match the following authors with the people contained in their works.

1. Anthony Boucher
2. Anton P. Chekov
3. G. K. Chesterton
4. Agatha Christie
5. Octavus Roy Cohen
6. Wilkie Collins
7. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
8. Mignon G. Eberhart
9. Paul Gallico
10. Erle Stanley Gardner
11. Frank Gruber
12. Dashiell Hammett
13. Clarence Budington Kelland
14. Ngaio Marsh
15. E. Phillips Oppenheim
16. Edgar Allan Poe
17. Milton Propper
18. Mary Roberts Rinehart
19. Sax Rohmer
20. Dorothy L. Sayers
21. Vincent Starrett
22. Rex Stout
23. Edgar Wallace
24. Jack Webb
25. Israel Zangwill

A. Roger Ackroyd
B. Scattergood Baines
C. Sir Henry Baskerville
D. Ned Beaumont
E. Delia Brand
F. Mervyn Bunter
G. Terry Clane
H. Susan Dane
J. Pauline Dubourg
K. Dukovski
L. Flambeau
M. Johnny Fletcher
N. Dr. Fu Manchu
O. Walter Ghost
P. Sammy Golden
Q. George Grodman
R. Jim Hanvey
S. Hiram Holliday
T. Martin Lamb
U. James Morlake
V. Miss Pinkerton
W. Tommy Rankin
X. Peter Ruff
Y. Rosanna Spearman
Z. Agatha Troy

Answers on page 155

FRANCIS M. NEVINS, JR.

"Mike" Nevins is a skillful storyteller, whether creating short fiction or spinning out a complex novel. His position as full professor at the St. Louis University School of Law gives him a realistic insight into legal matters that few other authors can match. His attention to detail furthers the quality of all his work, including his many nonfiction pieces about the mystery field and its personalities.

COP TO COP was written specifically for The SAINT Magazine. It launches a new series character, Sergeant Gene Holt.

COP TO COP

INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION
CENTER CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

To: P.J. Finch
Captain, Major Case Squad

Date: Oct. 26, 1983

Subject: Personnel Evaluation

From: S.W. Steinmetz
Captain, Detective Division

Pat, it was great to hear your fine Irish voice again yesterday after all the years since we went through the Academy together. Once again, welcome to the Department and congratulations on taking over the Major Case Squad.

You asked me for an informal report on Sergeant Gene Holt, who is under consideration for a promotion and transfer to your command. You said you wanted a frank cop-to-cop evaluation without the standard jargon, and this memo is my way of obliging. Hope it helps.

You've seen her personnel file already, so you know that Sergeant Holt is 41 years old and has been in the Department since 1974. Her first name is Eugenia, but everybody

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calls her Gene and she prefers it that way. She joined the force after her marriage turned into a disaster and at a time when we were under intense pressure to hire and promote women. As an old friend I can tell you in confidence that personally I hate all the race and sex discrimination that's sanctioned under the label of Affirmative Action, but I can also tell you cop to cop that Gene Holt has damn well earned every honor and promotion she ever received. She is quite frankly one hell of a fine officer.

The photos in her personnel file are all the proof you need that she's no beauty queen. She's shaped sort of like a pogo stick and she has to wear thick glasses and her hair is long and straight and full of gray streaks she refuses to dye. My hunch is that the divorce made her gun-shy of any more involvement with men and that this is why she does nothing to make herself look attractive. The point is, no man in this Department ever wrote a favorable performance report on her because she was sexy. All those statements in her file about what a dynamite detective she is are true.

Take the Kingsley murder last year, Report #DD-687M in her personnel file. That was the case where an armed burglar was supposed to have invaded the Kingsleys' house in the Cedar Knolls subdivision at a time when Mrs. K had just popped a trayful of homemade banana muffins in the oven as a midnight snack for herself and her husband. The burglar covered them with his gun, tied and gagged them in dining room chairs, ransacked the house, and then shot Mr. K dead in his chair on the way out. Neighbors heard the shot and called the police. Squad car men got to the house within five minutes and found Kingsley dead, his wife still tied and gagged in her chair, and no sign of the burglar. Gene had a flat tire on the way from her apartment to the Kingsley house and got there half an hour or so after the rest of the Detective Division team. Literally two minutes after the senior officer began briefing her, Gene announced that Mrs. K had killed her husband and tied and gagged herself afterwards. How did Gene know? Because the senior officer was munching one of those banana muffins while he

was briefing her, and every one of the cops in the house swore he hadn't touched the kitchen oven. If Mrs. K had been telling the truth, the muffins would have burned to a crisp. She confessed on the spot.

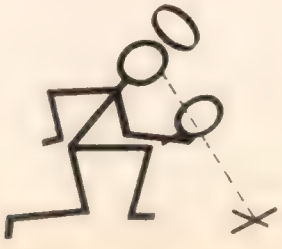
Or take the Fairfax case, Report #DD-966F. Cedric Fairfax and Alfred Hyde grew up together in a London slum and emigrated here as young men to make their fortunes. They started a company they called Fairhyde and became rich before they were thirty. Then they began fighting over some business matters and a young woman they both wanted. They each made nasty threats against the other in front of witnesses. One Saturday night Fairfax came back to the company office on the twentieth floor of the Amalgamated Bank building to catch up on some work. About 10:00 P.M. the security guard on that floor heard a shot, came running into the Fairhyde suite, and found Fairfax barely alive but with his brains mostly blown out and a .38 thrown across the room. He phoned in for the police and an ambulance, bent over the dying man, and asked him: "Who did it, Mr. Fairfax?" Later he swore over and over to us and the district attorney that Fairfax's answer was clear as a bell: "Hyde" or "Hyde did." The trouble was, Alfred Hyde was an officer of an interfaith religious organization that was meeting in the city that weekend and produced a banquet room full of priests, ministers, *and* rabbis who all swore on their respective versions of the Bible that he'd been with them at the organization's annual dinner all that evening. Well, Gene cracked that one a good hour before the ballistics report came in that would have told us the truth anyway. Both Fairfax and Hyde, you see, were Cockneys, and as you know, that group has a tendency to drop *h's* from words where they belong and to add *h's* where they don't. Fairfax had shot himself, and admitted it to the security guard, but what he intended as "I" or "I did" had sounded to the guard's U.S. ears like "Hyde" or "Hyde did"!

Not only is Gene a good cop, but she has an intuitive flair for situations that goes beyond a cop's street smarts. I remember the time, a couple months after she was promoted to

Detective Division, when we were interrogating a young punk we knew was the Ski Mask Bandit who had knocked off a bunch of all-night convenience stores and shot some clerks. We'd been questioning him for hours, and he'd been stonewalling like a master of the art, when Gene suddenly wandered in looking for me on some completely unrelated matter. She asked me what was happening and I spent two or three minutes filling her in. Then she trots over to the suspect in his chair and asks him: "Why not make it easy on yourself, man? I've just been with the three customers who were in the last store you hit, and they all identified your mug shots positively." And the idiot comes back with: "Bull *shit* they did, you stupid broad! Whaddaya think I wore the ski mask for?" Well, Judge Turn-'Em-Loose Turnbull, God's gift to our local rapists and killers, eventually ruled that that was a coerced confession, but we sent the guy away for ten to life on some other charges. Anyway, the point is that Gene Holt has both the skill and the luck that every good cop needs.

All in all, Pat, I would hate like hell to lose her from my division, but a transfer to Major Case Squad would be a tremendous career boost for her and so I recommend her to you without the slightest qualification. It's great to have an Academy classmate in the Department with me. Let's get together for some steak and brew and war stories some Saturday night when our husbands are at the ball game.

Best regards,
Suzy
S.W. Steinmetz
Captain, Detective Division ST



JOHN DALMAS

As with so many successful authors, John Dalmas has, in his writing, made excellent use of his past work experience. Included in his extensive list of occupations are farm worker, army medic, merchant seaman, logger, forest fire parachutist, and administrative forester. This, along with his Ph.D. in plant ecology, explains the compelling feeling of realism he engenders in the setting of THE IDES OF SEPTEMBER, whose locale is a wooded county bordering Lake Superior.

Less explainable, but equally impressive, is the sense of authentic police investigative work done by Matti Seppanen, his seasoned Finnish sheriff. Together, the various elements of this fine story add up to an exciting adventure whose verisimilitude is powerful and effective.

THE IDES OF SEPTEMBER

Mary Eberley sat at the kitchen window nursing her breakfast coffee, which now was merely warm. The white-and-blue porcelain clock said 7:40, the Ojibwa County courthouse was less than a ten-minute walk away, and the sheriff wasn't due there until eight. Outside the window, the lawn was white with frost. Mrs. Perttula was in the living room talking loud Finnish to her aged mother, who was hard of hearing.

I might as well start, she decided, and got up. The new jeans were stiff on her legs, the hunting boots unfamiliar weights. A gray twill shirt lent a touch of manliness to her slim, unmanly torso. After shrugging into her green twill jacket, she picked up her new lunch pail, the first she'd ever owned, and walked to the front door.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Perttula," she said.

"Good-bye, Mary."

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"How do you say good-bye in Finnish?"

"Nakemiin."

Mary turned to the grandmother. "Nakemiin, Mrs. Herronen."

The old lady beamed up from her rocker. "Nakemiin, tyttö," she said, and there was more, which Mary didn't understand.

"She says it's nice to have a young person living here again," Mrs. Perttula translated.

The autumn morning was crisp and pleasant as Mary walked down the maple-lined street. The leaves, so close to the great lake, were just starting to turn. Boarding with the Perttula's promised to be a new experience in itself. And living in a small town through an Upper Michigan winter.

The sheriff wasn't evident when she entered the office. She'd met him the day before, after arriving across the square at the White Pine Hotel, where the reception desk doubled as the Greyhound bus station.

A middle-aged deputy sat pecking deliberately at an elderly typewriter, filling out his watch report. He looked up, his index fingers poised.

"Can I help you?" He had an accent, like everyone else she'd spoken with here.

"I'm Mary Eberley. I'm here to see Sheriff Seppanen."

"He ain't in yet," the man said, returning to the report. She sat down. *I wonder what they think of having a sociology student spending a year up here on her graduate research,* she thought. Her appointment as a deputy was a legal formality, not a salaried job. It made her research possible.

Two minutes later Matti Seppanen walked in. Physically, he was almost a stereotypical back-country sheriff. Seemingly in his fifties, he was about five-feet-ten and beefy, with remarkably big shoulders. His face was clean-shaven, his brown hair crew-cut. But the stereotype ended at his eyes, which declared a direct simplicity and calm self-certainty.

"Good morning, Mary. Good morning, Eddy." The deputy looked up again. "Mary," the sheriff said, "I'd like you to meet Deputy Hietala. Eddy has the midnight-to-eight shift.

Eddy, this is Mary Eberley, the young lady we've been expecting."

Hietala nodded. "Nice to know you." Then he turned, pulling his report form from the platen.

"Anything I need to know about?" the sheriff asked him.

"Yeah. Hjalmar Tallmo phoned about ten minutes ago. He found Bill Skoog dead alongside the Stormy Lake Road, by Icehouse Lake. Looked like somebody shot him."

The sheriff picked up the call-in report from the dispatcher's desk—the dispatcher was in the cell block, feeding the few prisoners—then radioed the day deputy. "The sheriff calling sheriff three. Pete, where are you now?"

"I'm on 67 heading south out of town for Icehouse Lake, to check out the murder report on Bill Skoog."

"Good. I'll get there about ten minutes after you." He turned to Mary. "Let's go."

She almost had to trot to keep up with him as he strode to his pickup truck. *How many murders would Ojibwa County have in a typical year?* she wondered. She'd overlooked that item in her background study. Surely less than one. The county had barely 9,000 people, more than 3,000 of them here in Hemlock Harbor, the rest scattered over 1,500 square miles of back country. The population was predominantly Finnish-American, especially the rural population, with Swedes second and the rest assorted American. Hemlock Harbor was the only actual town. The other eight dots on the map included two resort villages on Lake Superior, three on concentrations of inland lakes, and three tiny crossroads places where farmers might stop to buy a six-pack. Her atlas identified the farmer villages as "Tamarack," "Makinen," and "Oskar."

She'd ridden through Makinen and Tamarack on the bus—each had five or six frame buildings, a pair of gas pumps, and a beer sign. Oskar was probably the same. She wondered how a town ever got named Oskar.

When the pickup topped the forested hill south of town, she could look out over the cold blue of Lake Superior, stretching sea-like to a distant horizon. A few miles offshore,

a long barge was being towed toward the harbor by a tug. Probably from Canada or Minnesota with a cargo of spruce logs for the paper mill.

She turned her attention to the sheriff. "You people talked as if you knew the dead man."

"Bill Skoog is a deputy game warden."

"Um. Is there a lot of bad feeling between local people and the game wardens?"

"Not much. A little bit here and there, now and then."

The radio squawked. "Sheriff one, sheriff one, this is the dispatcher. Over."

They didn't even bother to use the ten-code, Mary thought.

"This is sheriff one. What have you got, Marlin?"

"A Roy Olson just phoned in that he had a calf stolen last night. On the Wolf Creek Road. You know the place? Over."

"About three miles east of the Oskar Road. Where's the calf missing from? Barn? Pasture?"

"Pasture. Olson said he heard a shot about three this morning. Thinks maybe a headlighter shot it for a deer and then hauled it anyway."

The sheriff grunted. "Okay. One of us will be over later today, when we finish at Icehouse Lake. Is that it?"

"That's it."

"Okay. Sheriff one out." He hung up the microphone on the dashboard.

"Do you think it really was a poacher?" Mary asked.

"That killed the calf? Could be. Or could be a bear. Cows' eyes aren't the same color in a spotlight as a deer's, and poachers are usually in bed by midnight.

He pushed the heavy pickup hard through gently rolling forestland—broken at intervals by clusters of small farms, their buildings mostly small and neatly painted, their yards largely bare of trees, as if to let in as much sun as possible in winter. After half an hour, the deputy in sheriff three called for an ambulance. He'd found the dead man.

Five minutes later the sheriff left the blacktop for a graveled road, turning west into the national forest, the

woods now unbroken save for an occasional small lake or bog. Shortly afterwards, they turned north and could see two vehicles parked beside the road—one a white sheriff's-department sedan, the other a green pickup. Matti Seppanen slowed and pulled off behind the sedan.

The deputy walked over, clipboard in hand. He was still young and wore his blond hair in a white-sidewalls style.

"Pete Axelson, Mary Eberley," the sheriff said curtly, then walked directly to kneel by the body. His thick fingers opened the dead man's forest-green uniform jacket; the blood that had soaked it was congealed and crusted. Mary heard a muttered Finnish expletive. Seppanen rolled the body over, pulled up the shirt in back, and examined the bullet's exit hole.

"Look at it, Pete. What do you see?"

"A small hole. Couldn't have been a soft point slug."

"Right. I doubt it was even a rifle. Now, look where he was laying. What does it look like to you?"

Mary watched the deputy's eyes narrow, his lips pursing.

"Judas," he said, "there ain't much blood there, for somebody whose jacket is all soaked with it."

"Right. Maybe about as much as might drain out if he got put there after he laid dead awhile."

The sheriff walked to the game department pickup that stood with its door still open. "Take a look here," he said.

Axelson peered in thoughtfully. "Uh—the headlight switch is on. Does that mean anything?"

"It could. He might have left them on to light something." Matti strode off past the body in the direction the lights would have shone, Mary and Pete following, about twenty-five yards, to squat beside a pile of entrails.

"What do you see here?" he asked, looking up.

The younger man frowned. "Deer guts. And whoever killed it didn't know what's good. Left the heart and liver."

"All right. How many deer guts did you ever see?"

The deputy grinned. "Quite a few."

The sheriff took a jackknife from a pocket and slit the bulging, sack-like rumen, which drew open, displaying its con-

tents. There was a smell like fermented grass, like a cow's breath.

"Anything more to say?"

Axelson whistled silently. "Did you know what was in there?"

"I had a pretty good idea. So what have we got here?"

"It's full of grass and either clover or alfala. I don't . . . ."

Seppanen silenced him with a gesture and looked at Mary. "What does that tell you?"

She looked around. There was only forest—dark maples with more autumn color than in town, a few darker hemlocks, scattered golden-barked birches, and along the ditch bank some young firs. Only along the road was there grass, and no clover that she could see.

"Would you expect it to be full of grass and clover here?" she asked.

"You got it." The sheriff smiled up at her, wiped his knife blade on some roadside grass, and stood. "Grass maybe, but not a lot of clover. And for damn sure there'd be a lot of browse—leaves, needles, twigs." He turned to his deputy. "The first thing that hit me, they didn't look right for deer guts. I think we'll find they came out of a calf. And there's a Roy Olson over east of Oskar that had a calf stolen last night. So what do you make of this?"

Axelson concentrated. "It looks like—like someone killed a calf and brought the guts here to make it look like Bill caught some headlighters with an illegal deer and got shot by them. After they really killed him somewhere else and brought him here."

Seppanen nodded abruptly, strode back and dug in the dead man's pocket, coming out with keys on a ring. "It looks like he parked here himself. Otherwise they'd either be missing or in the ignition." He stood again. "Pete, bag the rumen for the game department to examine. Then stay here and wait for the ambulance. Follow them to town. Tell Doc Norrlund I want his best estimate of what kind of bullet killed Billy, and about what time. And check his jacket for any sign of powder burns."

He turned to Mary. "Let's take a walk." She nodded. When he had clipped a walkie-talkie on his belt, they crossed the dry roadside ditch. An inconspicuous trail, made years past by a tractor dragging logs, entered the forest, carpeted now with last year's moldering leaves. They followed it, the sheriff's eyes watching the ground.

"What do you see?" Mary asked. He shook his head. Two hundred feet from the road lay a lovely lake, and they stopped beside it. It was round, perhaps three-eighths of a mile across; she would not have hesitated to drink from it.

"Icehouse Lake," Matti said. Heavy forest came down to the shore all the way around, except at a quarter circumference to their left, where a large, lodge-like summer home stood in a circle of lawn, with a boathouse and other outbuildings nearby. A dock extended some fifty feet into the lake behind it. For a moment the sheriff contemplated the buildings, then raised the belt radio.

"Pete!"

Several seconds lapsed. "Yes, sheriff?"

"Radio Marlin and have him phone the Forest Service. Find out the nearest logging camp around here, the closest to Icehouse Lake." He clipped the radio back on his belt. "Time was," he said to Mary, "there was little gippo camps scattered all over the woods. When I was young. Now the loggers mostly live at home and drive to work."

She nodded. "Why did we come down to the lake?"

"Bill would have parked where he did for some reason. Maybe to come in on this trail." He looked across the lake. "That's a long dock."

"What did you think we might find here?"

He shrugged massive shoulders. "I thought we might see sign of a body being dragged. On a tarp maybe. But I didn't." He looked toward the summer home again, then they walked back to the road. Pete Axelson was sitting in his patrol car with the microphone in his hand and an open mapbook on his knee. After a minute or so, the receiver sounded.

"Sheriff three, this is sheriff's dispatcher. There are two

loggers, the Waananen Brothers, batching on a pulp job only about three-quarter miles northeast of Icehouse Lake, on the east side of the Stormy Lake Road. That's in the northeast quarter of the northwest quarter of Section 17, Township 47 North, Range 39 West. Their shack is back in where you can't see it from the road, but you can see where they drive in. They've put a culvert in the ditch, with gravel over it. You want me to repeat that?"

Pete had penciled an X on the map page. The sheriff took the microphone from him.

"This is Matti; I'm with Pete. We'll find it; I can hear their saws." He gave the mike back. As they went to his pickup, Mary could hear the distant sound of a chain saw, joined a moment later by a second. A truck approached from the north, loaded with logs—the rough black of sugar maple, smooth gold of yellow birch, gray of basswood and elm. It slowed as if to stop at the cluster of official vehicles, then drove on. Pete had covered the body with a square of white plastic so it wasn't exposed. The sheriff started the motor.

"If the truck driver had known there was a dead man here, do you think he'd have stopped?" Mary asked.

"Might have. People around here are more interested than in places like Milwaukee or Chicago. Or Ann Arbor. The residents, I mean, not the summer people." He looked at the young woman beside him. "I'll try to mention the kinds of things I think you might want to know, but don't hesitate to ask questions. I'm surprised you ain't used the tape recorder more," he added, referring to the small instrument hanging from her shoulder.

She smiled into the big square face. "I'm lucky. I can sit down later and play back the day from memory. That's one reason I had a 3.87 grade point average as an undergraduate."

"Um. If you ever want a real job as a deputy, let me know."

They climbed back into Matti's pickup and headed in the direction of the logging camp. The road dropped into a

broad flat, the hardwood forest giving way largely to spruces, firs, and other conifers. The sheriff slowed. There was the culvert, and he crossed it to follow wheel tracks back in among the trees. Soon, they came to a small, battered travel trailer with a propane tank and a little, prefabricated metal shed. The chain saws were much nearer now. The sheriff shifted in to four-wheel drive and pushed on. They heard a tree fall. The nearer saw slowed, to begin a series of alternate idlings and snarlings as the operator began to saw off limbs.

Matti parked beside the logger's jeep and they walked toward the noise, the woods becoming swamp. Moisture from the spongy moss-covered ground darkened their boots. The woods became open, the larger trees lying now as piles of small logs along a tractor trail, backed by delicate green saplings that would grow to take their place. The smells were new to Mary; she decided she liked them.

Yes, the cutter told them, he'd heard a gunshot the evening before, some distance off, probably about 9:15. He'd looked at the clock at 8:50 when he'd heard a low-flying plane, and the gunshot was some while after that. He'd gone to sleep about ten.

He wasn't sure what direction the shot came from. It was hard to tell when there was only one, but he thought it was from the south.

Back in the pickup, Mary mentioned that she'd gotten the interview on tape. "I noticed," Matti said, and began the slow bouncy drive back to the county road.

"So how does it stack up now?" she asked.

"Hmm. I might as well tell Pete and headquarters while I'm telling you. Hold the mike for me; I need both hands to drive here."

He summarized his conversation with Waananen, the logger. "It was interesting what Waananen said about the low-flying plane. That dock at the lodge is awful long for two or three private boats; more like a seaplane dock. And we know there's quite a bit of drugs dealt in the Stormy Lake and Kekebic resort areas.

"So, just to speculate—suppose Bill Skoog is patrolling along, watching for headlighters—poachers that hunt deer at night with spotlights. And suppose he sees a plane start down to land on Icehouse Lake and gets curious. It ain't really any of his business, but he parks and goes down to the lake to watch. And then, instead of doing the smart thing—heading back and mentioning it to us the next day—suppose he walks around the shore to snoop a little. Maybe peeks in a window. You might have noticed his boots were wet, as if he'd got in some wet ground."

"Umm. Everything fits, doesn't it?"

"What we've got fits. What there is of it."

They passed the patrol car and green pickup, turning west a short way farther on. Another quarter mile brought them to a wide driveway, blacktopped against dust, that curved in through timber to the large house on Icehouse Lake. Matti drove in and parked behind a black, four-wheel-drive pickup standing high on large tires. He radioed in his location. Then they went up the wide front steps to the wrap-around front porch, where he pressed the doorbell. Chimes sounded inside. When there was no response, the sheriff sauntered out to the black pickup, Mary half a step behind and feeling watched, exposed. He peered over the tailgate, then circled the vehicle.

They heard a window open, a slight sound pregnant with threat. Under other circumstances it would not have been noticed. Seppanen raised the radio to his mouth and spoke casually but not quietly. "Sheriff three, this is the sheriff. There's a black pickup parked here, Illinois plates 1PK378. The box looks freshly scrubbed, the rest just hosed off."

He put the radio back on his hip. "To discourage anyone from shooting us out the window," he murmured. "And maybe get them looking backwards, thinking what they should have done, instead of frontwards, planning."

Briskly then, he walked to the incinerator behind the house. Opening the front, he carefully explored the ashes with a poker leaning there. "Sheriff three, this is the sheriff. There are fragments of heavy polyethylene in the incinera-

tor, like it could have been a plastic tarp. Also some charred blue denim fragments, a zipper like off a pair of pants—and someone just came out the back door. Sheriff out." He turned and waited for the man.

"Can I help you, officer? I'm afraid I was sleeping late this morning."

He was in his late twenties, possibly thirty, his brown hair frowzy, supporting his statement.

"Is that your pickup?" asked Seppanen.

"Yep."

"You're not from Illinois. You're from somewhere around Lake Superior; I can tell from how you talk. You live around Finns."

The man grinned at him. "Takes one to know one. I lived in Hibbing, Minnesota, until I was nineteen. I guess it never totally rubs off." He thrust out a hand. "My name is Jim Connelly." They shook. "What can I do for you?"

"Did you hear any shots last night?"

"Yes, matter of fact, I heard two. One around nine o'clock. The other was at 9:20, because I remember looking at the clock and thinking that the poachers must be busy. I have to admit, it reminded me of fall in Minnesota."

"Kind of looks like poachers. We had a game warden killed last night, just over there by the road. There was a pile of guts nearby, as if he caught someone dressing out a deer and they shot him."

Connelly shook his head. "The hazards of being a north-country game warden."

"There's something that bothers me though." Matti's eyes were steady. "Murder is a serious felony; shooting deer is a misdemeanor. Why would someone commit murder to get out of a $200 fine?"

The man became studiedly casual. "Well, sheriff, you know how clannish these Finn farmers can be. No offense, but they don't much care for non-Finns butting into their affairs." He shrugged. "That's the way it was back home, anyway. What you need is to have Finn game wardens."

Seppanen's quiet eyes threatened to see through the man.

"You got a point there. Mind if I look around?"

Connelly's gaze hardened. "Just stay out of the house, unless you've got a warrant. I tried to be helpful, but I don't appreciate being accused of some crime." He turned and walked stiffly to the house. Matti watched him through the door, then raised his radio again.

"Sheriff three, we've got a suspect. White male, six feet, a hundred seventy pounds, brown hair, close-clipped dark beard, range accent. Got that? Calls himself Jim Connelly. Says he's from Hibbing, Minnesota. And he's got a scar below the left eye."

"Okay, I got that. Sheriff, the ambulance is just pulling in."

"Right. I ain't done yet. Connelly lied to me. Said there were two shots, about nine o'clock and 9:20. Which fits the way things were set up to look but not the way they were.

"So I want you to get any fingerprints off Billy's wallet and badge case, also the right front door and headlight switch of his truck. Steering wheel too; the killer might have touched it."

There was a brief silence, during which Mary could visualize the deputy scribbling rapidly on his clipboard, a sort of long-distance stenographer. "Right, sheriff. I got it."

"Okay, that's all for now." Seppanen clipped the radio back on his belt.

A backwoods Sherlock Holmes, thought Mary. *He doesn't miss a thing.* "What's next?" she asked.

"Let's just look around." He walked directly toward the house, stopping outside a back window to examine the flower bed beneath it, its frost-killed plants shriveled and brown. A dozen yards away, the bed had been spaded and freshly raked. He went to it, and from a pocket took a plastic specimen bag and filled it with soil. Then he examined the wall, and with his pocket knife dug something from it. Silently, he showed it to Mary—a somewhat flattened slug.

The back door opened, and they looked up into the muzzle of an automatic pistol.

"What did you find, sheriff?"

Seppanen simply looked with answering.

"Back away with your hands up." Connelly came down the steps and gestured toward the door. "In the house. Move!"

"No, thanks."

"I'll count to five."

"Pull the trigger and it'll be heard. I've called in a description of your truck and you. Right down to the scar beneath your eye."

The man stood, undecided, his mind racing.

"Tell you what," the sheriff said. "Let me handcuff Mary for you. Then let her run off in the woods over there"—he gestured westward—"in the direction away from my deputy. When she's got a three or four minute start, I'll take the battery out of my truck so she can't come back and drive it or use the radio. Then you can handcuff me and take me with you."

"Matti! He'll kill you!"

"I don't think so. He'll drop me off in the boonies somewhere. And if he kills me, that's better than both of us getting it. I'm sixty years old, while you're—what? Twenty-five?"

Connelly stared at him suspiciously, then decided.

"Handcuff her," he said.

Matti manacled her wrists in front of her, then leaned forward and kissed her cheek. "Just in case I don't see you again, have a good life."

"Okay," said Connelly, "get out of here. That way." He pointed, and reluctantly she started, then, at fifty feet, began to run. She had just reached the forest's edge when the pistol boomed. She turned, saw Matti on the ground, and screamed. Connelly half pivoted, his feet not moving, and tipped over, falling without trying to catch himself. Her second scream cut short as she saw Matti start to get up, and she headed back to him.

When she arrived, he was on one knee by the gunman, who lay on his side with a knife hilt jutting out at the breastbone.

"How?" she asked.

Matti got heavily up. "In the old days, some Finns were

what they called *puukkojunkkari,* knife fighter. When I was a kid, I learned to throw a knife. Like this." He raised his hands above his shoulders, then abruptly doubled forward, his right hand flashing to his collar in back, then flashing forward. "I used to practice that when I was a teenager. Then, when I joined the sheriff's department, I started carrying a knife between my shoulder blades. For thirty-three years I never needed it. Then, he turned his head to see where you'd gotten to, and that gave me my chance."

The sheriff took a deep breath. "You know, that's the closest I come to getting killed since Italy in 1944."

At the end of the shift, Matti, Mary, and Pete stopped at the bar in the While Pine Hotel, settling down from the day.

"Why did you want me to fingerprint Bill Skoog's wallet?" Pete asked.

"Connelly said Skoog wasn't a Finn. Why would he think that? Actually he was a Finn; it's just that, like quite a few Finns, he had a Swede name. I figured he must have looked in Bill's wallet and seen the name and knew it wasn't Finn." Matti raised his glass then, swirling the amber whiskey and clear ice cubes, watching them pensively.

"A penny for your thoughts, Matti," Mary said softly.

"I was just wondering. If maybe I shouldn't have killed him. He might have let me go, you know."

"No, you done right," Axelson said. "He killed Bill; he probably would have killed you."

"Yeah, I'm not regretting. But Pete . . . . "

"Yeah?"

"He let Mary go. Too bad I had to pay him back like that."

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ANSWERS TO DETECTIVE FICTION QUIZ

1–T	6–Y	11–M	16–J	21–O
2–K	7–C	12–D	17–W	22–E
3–L	8–H	13–B	18–V	23–U
4–A	9–S	14–Z	19–N	24–P
5–R	10–G	15–X	20–F	25–Q

GEOFFREY OSBORNE

Geoffrey Osborne, British journalist, is a chief sub-editor on the Bristol Evening Post and a member of the British Crime Writers Association. His several full-length thrillers and many short stories have been published in Britain, Scandinavia, Italy, and Australia. We hope his debut appearance here will help establish him in America as well.

In this fascinating tale of intrigue, espionage, and murder, events and circumstances, like THE TURNING OF THE SCREW, slowly and inexorably build toward the jolting climax.

THE TURNING OF THE SCREW

The screw had been tightened to its limit—and with it his courage had been screwed to the sticking point. Like Macbeth, he saw a dagger before his face. Not a dagger made for murder. Just an ordinary carving knife. But it would do.

Edward Anders tested the needle prick of its point and stroked the razor-sharp edge with the ball of his thumb while he waited for the phone to ring . . . to make an appointment with death.

Six months ago, the thought would have seemed inconceivable. But now that he had made up his mind to kill, he was obsessed by the idea. There was no alternative. His career was at stake.

He stared at the phone, willing it to ring, then shifted his gaze to his watch. Any minute now and he would hear that hateful, toneless voice.

Anders remembered that dreadful night, six months ago, when he'd first heard it—the night the first turn of the screw had been made.

"Anders?" The first contact had been little more than a whisper over the wire.

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"Yes."

"You're a brilliant young aircraft designer, Anders, but does your boss know you also have designs on his wife?"

"What the ...."

"In the morning," the voice had interrupted, "the postman will deliver a photograph of you and the lady in question. If you don't do exactly as I say, copies of that photograph will be sent to the head of your department, the chairman of your company, and other senior executives."

"Who the hell are you?" Anders had demanded angrily.

"You can call me Mr. Conscience. After all, that's what you are going to pay me—conscience money." A humourless laugh, and then: "I'll ring you at seven tomorrow."

The telephone had gone dead before Anders could ask any more questions.

He'd slept little that night. His inside was cold, his skin was clammy with sweat, and he was physically sick with worry. But he was up early next morning to open the door and take the envelope from the postman before the man had time to poke it through the letter-box of his bachelor flat.

The photograph was worse than he'd imagined. There could be no doubt that he would lose his job if the man who called himself Conscience carried out his threat.

But that must never be allowed to happen. Anders thought of the big, beautiful bird that was taking shape on the drawing board—the giant supersonic passenger plane that would lead the world.

Many of the new ideas in its design were acknowledged to be his; and his contribution would be rewarded. It was generally recognised that he would take over when the present chief designer retired in a few months' time. A seat on the board would follow within a year—and he would be only thirty-three.

He couldn't let all that go for ... for this.

He'd looked again at the picture, at the woman. No longer young—but several years younger than her husband—she was in the final bloom of her summer, luscious but slightly

risky-looking, like a fly-blown blackberry.

It was all her fault. She'd led him on, even if he had been easily led. He wondered how Conscience had been able to take the photograph without either of them knowing, in the woman's own bedroom.

A pre-set camera, focused on the bed, with its shutter operated by remote control? Or was she in league with Conscience? He dismissed that idea as too ridiculous, deciding not to tell her anything about Conscience or the picture. She might panic and let something slip to her husband. Their brief affair had ended weeks ago, and he had no desire to become involved with her again.

Conscience's demand, when it came that evening, had been modest enough: Fifty pounds, in notes, to be sent to an accommodation address. He would ring again, at seven the following Tuesday.

And he had rung at the same time each Tuesday for the past six months. At first it had been fifty pounds, then a hundred, then two hundred.

Each week, the demands were accompanied by threats and taunts.

"You'll pay, Anders. I know you better than you know yourself. I've made a thorough study of you. You'll keep paying all right.

"I'll kill you," Anders had once shouted into the phone.

"How can you? You don't know who I am. Anyway, you wouldn't have the nerve."

That was when the seed of murder had been planted in Anders' mind.

But the screw had kept turning, tighter and tighter. Two hundred pounds, three hundred pounds ... until last Tuesday when Conscience had dropped his bombshell.

"Anders, I've decided to call it a day."

"What do you mean?"

"The big payoff, and then you won't hear from me again. This will be the last time."

"How much?"

"Ten-thousand."

"Ten thou .... My God, Conscience, this time you've turned the screw too far. I haven't got it!"

"Then get it. Next Tuesday."

"But ..." A thought flashed into Anders' mind. "... if this is the final payoff, I shall want all your copies of the photographs—and the negatives."

"Of course. I'll send them to you—when I've got the money."

"No! A straight exchange."

Conscience considered this, and then said doubtfully: "That means we'll have to meet."

"Yes."

"All right. Next Tuesday. Have the money ready. I'll ring you at seven to tell you where and when."

The last time, Conscience had said. But blackmailers always said that, didn't they? And then they always came back for more.

It damned well would be the last time, though. A dead man couldn't come back for more.

That was when the seed of murder had germinated.

The shrill ring of the telephone jerked him back to the present. He snatched up the receiver.

"Anders?"

"Yes."

"You have the money?"

"Yes."

"Then listen carefully."

Anders parked his car in the lay-by, as instructed. He watched the eight-fifteen bus trundle towards him along the country lane. There was no one at the bus stop, so the green-and-white double-decker didn't pause. Soon it disappeared around a bend.

He left the car, walked to the bus stop, and waited.

There were still no people about, and no houses—except for a large grey stone building on the other side of the road. It was obviously empty. The ground floor windows were boarded up, and those on the upper storeys stared blackly

back at him.

A sudden movement caught his eye. He watched as a man emerged from the cover of one of the thick stone gateposts and crossed towards him.

"You have the money, Mr. Anders?"

The voice sounded different off the phone, and the man was much smaller than Anders had imagined.

"Yes." Anders put his hand into his inside pocket and slid out a long, slim brown envelope. "And you have something for me?"

The man nodded, pulled a smaller envelope from his own jacket, and held it out, stepping closer to Anders. He looked nervous, almost frightened.

With good reason, thought Anders viciously as his hand clenched tightly on one end of the long envelope and he thrust forward and up, aiming for the heart.

The envelope crumpled against the man's chest and was suddenly stained red as the knife it had concealed sliced in.

Anders felt no remorse. He simply felt . . . safe. Nobody would connect him with the dead man; and he'd burned the negative and four copies of the photograph.

The phone rang, and he moved across the room to answer it.

"Edward Anders speaking."

"Ah, Anders. I must congratulate you on a beautifully executed execution."

Anders, white with shock, almost dropped the phone.

"You really thought you'd killed me, didn't you?" Conscience's toneless voice went on.

"But don't worry about the poor fellow you did murder. He was expendable, I assure you. I planned it this way—and I'm sure you'll agree that I made an excellent assessment of your character. You reacted in just the way I knew you would. The film is first-class, by the way. We've just processed it and . . . ."

"Film?" Anders' voice was a croak.

"Yes. Of the murder. I had a cine-camera in an upstairs

room of that house. I must say that you're remarkably photogenic, Anders."

"But ... but why?"

"I wanted a better hold on you than just dirty pictures, Anders. It's no longer just a domestic affair between you and your bosses. If you don't toe the line now, that film will go straight to the police—and you'll get a life sentence for murder."

"But I was telling you the truth before." The despair in Anders' voice was complete. "I don't have ten thousand pounds. I haven't anything. You've cleaned me out."

"I know that," replied Conscience, "and if it's any consolation to you, you can have all your money back."

"I ... I don't understand."

"We don't want your money, my dear chap. All we want from you is a complete set of the design drawings of the new supersonic passenger transport. And we want it by next Tuesday."

For the first time, Anders detected the slight foreign accent underlying the flat monotone of Conscience's voice.

"You once said that I'd turned the screw too hard," Conscience went on, "but I think I turned it to perfection, don't you?" ST

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CROCODILE "007"

In Providence, Rhode Island, a caiman, a tropical American crocodile related to the alligator, was charged with biting a police officer. The Providence police department had the caiman booked just like any other individual charged with the commission of a crime. Not to be outdone by the legendary James Bond, the police department assigned the identification number of "007" to the bewildered caiman.

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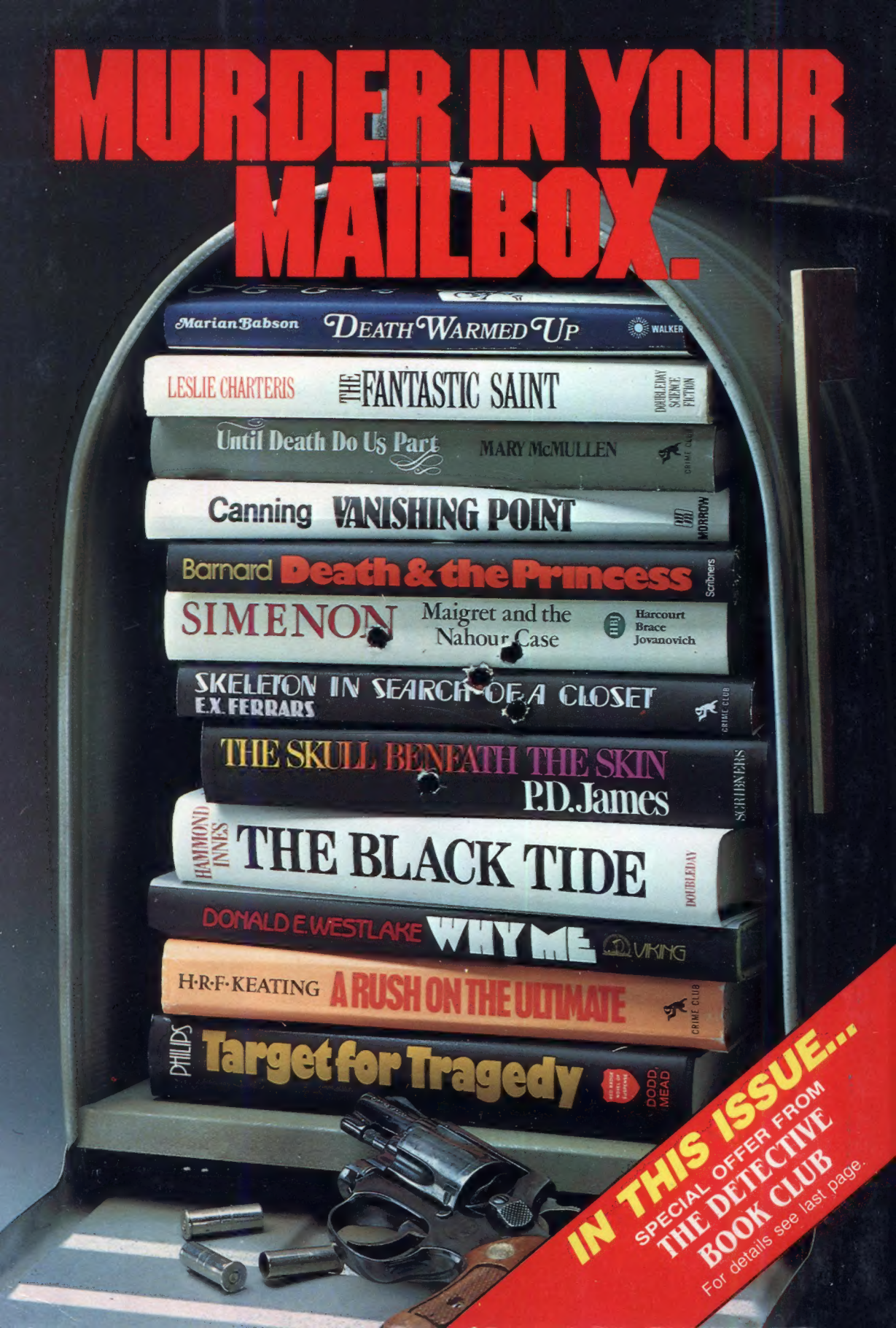

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